
IMPRIMATUR,

Carolus Alston, R. P. D.
Hen. Episc. Lond. à
Sacris.

Septemb. 4.
1689.

IMPRIMATUR,

Carolus Alston, R. P. D.
Hen. Episc. Lond. à
Sacris.

Septemb. 4.
1689.

SERMONS
AND
DISCOURSES
ON
Several Occasions.

By *WILLIAM WAKE*, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to Their Ma-
jesties; and Preacher to the Honou-
rable Society of *GRATS-INN*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Wic. Chitwell*, at the Rose and
Crown in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*.
And *Wm. Rogers*, at the Sun over-against
St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet. MDCXC.

T O

The RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir WILL. RAWLINSON, Kt.

One of the Lords Commissioners of
the Great Seal of *England*.

Sir JOHN HOLT, Kt.

Lord Chief Justice of *England*.

T O

The HONOURABLE
Sir WILL. GREGORY, Kt.

One of the Justices of Their Majes-
ties Court of *Kings-Bench*.

Sir JOHN POWELL, Kt.

Sir THO. ROOKESBY, Kt.

Justices of Their Majesties Court of
Common-Pleas.

Sir

Sir EDWARD NEVILL, Kt.

Sir JOHN TURTON, Kt.

Barons of Their Majesties Court of
Exchequer.

AT O
The WORSHIPFUL,
THE
M A S T E R S
OF THE
B E N C H.

AND TO
The Rest of the MEMBERS
OF THE
HONOURABLE SOCIETY
OF

G R A T S . - I N N .

Having

HAVING a long time designed to make some publick acknowledgment of my great Obligations to you, I could not tell in what way more properly to do it, than by presenting to you a small *Collection* of some of those *Discourses*, which I have lately had the Honour to Preach before you.

'Tis upon this account that I now crave leave to Prefix your *Names* to these *Sermons*: Both as a Testimony of that particular Re-

A 4 spect

The Epistle Dedicatory.

ſpect I owe to you; and to let the World ſee, what *Persons* they are by whom I have the Happineſs to be Countenanced and Encouraged in my Miniſtry: Such whoſe *Integrity* and *Abilities*, have rendred them at Once both the *Support* and *Ornament* of our *Courts of Juſtice*: Whoſe firmneſs to the true Intereſt of our *Church* and *Government*, in the *Worſt* of *Times*, have ſet them above the power of Malice to Calumniate: Who by ſuffering heretofore, rather than they would betray either the
Li-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Liberties of their *Countray*,
or their *Own Consciences*,
have effectually convinced all
Impartial men, That as it
cannot be *Ignorance* of our
Laws and *Constitution*, so nei-
ther is it *Interest*, or any
other unworthy *Design*, but
the clear *Evidence* of *Right*,
that engages them to that
Submission they now pay to
the *Present Government*: And
who that they may long pos-
sess those *Places* they so wor-
thily fill, and be the *Honour*
of the *Bench*, as the *Rest* of
the *Society* are of the *Profession*,
is the *Hearty Prayer* of Him
who

The Epistle Dedicatory.

who with all possible Re-
spect will always remain,

Your most Obliged

Humble Servant,

WILLIAM WAKE,

The

The CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

OF the Qualifications required to a Profitable Hearing of God's Word.

Luke viii. 8.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

SERMON II.

Of the Benefit and Practice of Consideration.

Deuter. xxxii. 29.

O! that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

S E R.

The Contents.
SERMON III.
Of the *Devices* of Satan.

2 Cor. ii. 11.

---For we are not ignorant of his
devices.

SERMON IV.
Of *stedfastness* in Religion.

2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

*Ye therefore, Beloved, seeing ye know
these things before, beware lest ye also
being led away with the error of the
wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.*

*But grow in grace, and in the
knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Je-
sus Christ: To him be Glory both now
and for ever, Amen.*

SERMON V.
Of the Reasonableness and Terrors
of the future Judgment.

A&S

The Contents.

Acts xxiv. 25.

*And as he reason'd of Righteousness,
Temperance, and Judgment to come,
Felix trembled, and answer'd, Go thy
way for this time, when I have a conve-
nient season, I will call for thee.*

S E R M O N VI.

*Of the Causes of mens delaying their
Repentance.*

Acts xxiv. 25.

*---Felix trembled; and answer'd,
Go thy way for this time, when I have a
convenient season I will call for thee.*

S E R M O N VII.

*Of the Danger of mens delaying their
Repentance.*

Acts xxiv. 25.

*---Felix trembled; and answer'd,
Go thy way for this time, when I have
a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

S E R.

The Contents.

SERMON VIII.

An Exhortation to mutual *Charity*
and *Union* among *Protestants*.

Rom. xv. 5, 6, 7.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth, glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

SERMON IX.

Of the *Nature* and *Benefit* of a public *Humiliation*.

Joel ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now saith the Lord,
Turn ye even to me with all your heart,
and with Fasting, and with Weeping,
and with Mourning: And rent your
heart

The Contents.

heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

SERMON X.

Of Contending Earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.

Jude 3.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, That you should Earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the saints.

DISCOURSE I.

Of the Nature, and End, of the Holy Sacrament of the Lords Supper.

I Cor.

The Contents.

1 Cor. xi. 24.

This do, in Remembrance of Me.

DISCOURSE II.

Of the Honour due to the Blessed Virgin.

Luke i. 48, 49.

For behold, from henceforth, all Generations shall call me blessed: For he that is Mighty hath done for me great things, and holy is his name.

E R R A T A.

S*erm.* 1. p. 27. l. 6. r. Christ's. *Ib.* l. 24. r. an Indisposition.

Serm. 3. p. 80. l. 16. r. may we.

Serm. 5. p. 161. l. 3. r. he so much. *Ib.* l. 15. r. Interests. p. 182. l. 1. personally r. presently.

Serm. 6. p. 190. l. 10. *dels* been. p. 202. l. 19. r. than as they.

Serm. 8. p. 264. l. 17. r. in the Faith.

Serm. 11. p. 383. l. 11. *marg.* r. illustre.

Serm. 12. p. 471. l. 23. r. do not esteem. l. 24. *dels* not. p. 489. l. 13. these r. those. p. 493. l. 7. r. ordinarily.

O F

1

OF THE
QUALIFICATIONS
Required to a Profitable Hearing
OF
GOD'S WORD.
A
SERMON
Preach'd on the
Gospel for *Sexagesima*-Sunday,
AT
GRAYS-INN, 1689.

LUKE VIII. 8.

*He that hath Ears to hear, let
him Hear.*

THE Words are a kind of *Pro-verbial* Expression, with which
our Blessed *Saviour* very * fre-
quently concludes his Discourses to his
B Disci-

* Mat. xi.
15.
--xiii. 9. 43.
Mar vii. 16
Luk. xiv.
35, &c.

The First Sermon.

Disciples, the more to engage them to a just Attention to, and Consideration of that holy *Gospel* which he delivered unto them: And the import whereof we cannot better learn, than from that excellent *Parable* to which they are here subjoin'd.

A Sower went out to sow his Seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it: And some fell upon a Rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture: And some fell among Thorns, and the Thorns sprang up with it, and choaked it: And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold: And when he had said these things, he cried,

He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.

In which *Parable* our Blessed Saviour sets forth to us the different success which his *Gospel* then did, and would ever after be likely to meet with, according to the different dispositions of those to whom it was Preach'd.

It is indeed an uncomfortable Reflection, and, I think I may say one of the greatest discouragements we labour under,

The First Sermon.

3

under, in the discharge of our *Ministry*, to consider how very little benefit, for the most part, all our Endeavours have upon the minds of those to whom we declare the *Gospel of Christ*. That after all we can do, either by the *Goodness* or *Terrors of the Lord to perswade men*, yet scarce a *fourth part* brings any fruit at all to perfection, and even those too in a very small measure. Some few perhaps there are, who produce a little increase; they *hear the word*, and consider their *duty*, and return it *thirty-fold* in Piety and Good works: But for the *sixty*, and the *hundred fold*, scarce any there are, that ever arrive at this pitch, or but give us any great cause to hope, that ever they will come up to it.

2 Cor. v.

11.

Mat. xiii. 8.

Instead of fruitless Complaints in a matter of so great consequence both to our *Ministry*, and to your *Salvation*, I shall make it my endeavour on this occasion, both for the happier prosecution of my own Duty, and, if it may please God, for the greater benefit of your Souls, plainly to lay before you the cause of this: By resolving it, as both the Authority of our Saviour, and the natural reason of the thing its self require I should, into the general indisposition of Men to

B 2

receive

The First Sermon.

receive the *Gospel*. We now, as the *Sower* in the *Parable*, scatter the same *Seed* on all the parts of the *Field* indifferently: We desire that every one should yield a suitable increase. What can possibly be the cause of that strange variety we find in the product, that one part should bring forth a plentiful crop of *Faith* and *Good works*; another either none at all, or but a very small one in comparison, but only this, That the *Ground* is in some better prepared to receive the *Seed* than it is in others, and therefore brings forth the *Fruit* accordingly.

This is the plain design both of the *Parable* before mentioned, and of that *Exhortation* with which our Saviour here concludes it in the words of the *Text*,

He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.

In my Discourse upon which words, that I may pursue the same *Method* which our *Blessed Lord* did in his *Parable*, I will

I. Show you what sort of *Hearers* they are, to whom the *Word* is in vain spoken; who are not likely to benefit themselves by our *Preaching*. And

II. Will

II. Will offer some *Rules* for the disposing of your *Souls* in such a manner, that by the *Grace* of God you may be fit to receive benefit by it.

I. I am to show what kind of *Hearers* they are, to whom the Word is in vain spoken, who are not likely to benefit themselves by our *Preaching*.

In pursuance of which Point, I should be infinite should I insist particularly on all those indispositions that are apt to render a man an unprofitable *Hearer* of Divine Truth. I will reduce this first sort of *Auditors* to as few *Generals* as I can, and that with all the freedom and plainness, that both the *Nature* and *End* of such an Undertaking require.

1. And the first that I shall mention, is, *The Careless Hearer*.

It is the misfortune of too many, in the *Church* of *Christ*, that in St. *Paul's* 2 Tim. iii. Character, they *have a form of Godliness*, 5. but are little acquainted with the *Power of it*. They come to our Assemblies, and hear our Discourses, and for the time are very much affected with them: But they go away, and presently they forget

The First Sermon.

what they heard ; their Holy Affections are scattered as a morning Cloud; they grow cold and indifferent as they were before; nor much concern themselves with any farther thoughts of Religion, till the next Sunday comes, and another Sermon again puts them in mind of it. As if the end of all our *Preaching* were only to make the Service a little the more solemn; to entertain them an hour extraordinary in the *Church*; and if they did but sit out that, with any tolerable Attention, they had then discharged their duty, they had done all that was required of them.

To such *Auditors* as these, I would only beg leave to remonstrate how unreasonable such a negligence as this is; and of what a dangerous consequence it will most certainly prove to them in the end. Our Discourses in these Places, all of them I am sure should be, and I believe for the most part are, either *Explications* of that *Duty* which God requires of us, or *Exhortations* to fulfil it; or else to shew the danger and baseness of those *Temptations*, that most usually draw men aside from it. Now all these naturally imply an obligation on the part of those that *hear* us, to do somewhat in pursuance

The First Sermon.

7

purfuanee of thefe instructions: Either to fulfil this *Duty*, or to fly thofe *fin*s that are contrary to it; or to watch and arm themfelves againft thofe *Temptations* which they are forewarn'd will otherwife be apt to feduce them from it. And if they neglect to do this, they will be much more inexcufable, than if they had never been instructed by us: What our Saviour once faid of the *Jews* with reference to his *Preaching*, will be found as true now, with refpect to ours: *If I had not come and fpoken unto them, they had not had fin; but now they have no cloak for their fin.* Joh. xv. 22.

It is not in difcourfes of this kind as in other ordinary addreffes that are fometimes made to us: which if they do but afford us fome agreeable entertainment for the prefent, we have our defire; and though we afterwards never trouble our felves with any farther thoughts of them, yet we run no great hazard, nor it may be fuftain any Lofs by our neglect of them.

But when we tell you your *Duty*, and lay before you the *Doctrine* by which you are to be Saved, the *Case* is much otherwife. We fpeak as the *Commissioners* of God; and as the *Ambaffadors*

The First Sermon.

dors of Christ we beseech you to be reconciled unto Him. The words which we deliver unto you, they are not our own, but His that sent us: they are the rules and measures by which you ought to live, and by your neglect or observance whereof, you must preserve or lose your Souls to all Eternity. The light esteem of what we say, do not mistake, it reflects not upon us, but on him whose *Ministers* we are; whose *Gospel* we preach, and whose *Goodness* we set forth, and who therefore will one day call you to a severe account for that little regard you now shew of what we deliver unto you. But

2dly. A second sort of *Hearers*, who reap but little benefit by all our discourses are, The *Curious Hearers*.

For such there still are in our days, as well as we read there were heretofore in the *Apostles*; Who hold mens Persons in Admiration, and esteem the *Gospel* of *Christ* more according to the *Preachers Eloquence*, than its own *Authority*. One is of *Paul*, another of *Apollos*, and a third of *Cephas*; As if the business of our Preaching were to please their Fancies; not to instruct their Minds and to reform their Manners; and that simplicity which was
once

The First Sermon.

9

once the Glory of the *Gospel*, were now to be esteem'd the scandal of its *Ministers*.

— Ib. ver.
17, 18, 19.
and 2 Cor.
iv. 13.

Hence it is that so many of our *Auditors*, instead of coming to our discourses as they ought, to *bear* their *Duty*, and confirm their *Faith*, and encrease their *Piety*, come rather to *observe*, and *censure*; The application they make, is not to enter into their *Closets*, and Meditate upon what they have Heard, and consider how they may benefit their Souls by it; and then to beg the assistance of *God's Grace* to enable them so to do; But to Applaud or Despise the *Preacher*, according as he has had the Fortune to be liked or disliked by them. There is hardly any defect in the *Preacher* so small, that is not enough to distast them against the very *Doctrine* that is delivered: And be the *Duty* never so clearly and solidly established, yet if the *Method* be not exact, the *Style* correct, the *Subject* such as they approve; the *Voice*, the *Action*, nay and sometimes the very *Look* of him that *speaks* to them, agreeable to their Fancies, all is spoiled, and they are not *Edified*.

But alas! Who is *Paul*, or who is *A-* 2 Cor. iv.
pollos, or who is *Cephas*? Are we not 5.
all the Ministers of *Christ*, and your Ser-

v. mts

The First Sermon.

wants for Jesus sake? Do we not all Preach to you the same common Salvation? Is it not the same Gospel that is delivered by every one of us? What if we have not all of us the same accidental advantages? If another speak to you with more Ornament and Eloquence? Must therefore my Weakness, render the Gospel of Christ Contemptible?

I would to God, for your sakes, we were all such as you desire. That we could every one of us not only instruct,
 1 Cor. ix. 22. but please you too to *Edification*; that so by any means, if it were possible, we might gain some of you. But yet, in the words of St. Paul, give me leave freely to say of this *Curiosity*, That verily
 1 Cor. vi. 7. there is a fault among you. And what wonder if you do not reap that real Advantage we could wish from our instructions, when alas! it is not That you look after: You come with *curiosity* to gratify an itching Ear, not with true Humility, to increase your Knowledge, and improve your Piety. But,

3dly, A third sort of *Hearers* to be considered in this place are, The Carnal and Sensual Hearers: Men, who in their wills and desires are utter Enemies to the Practice of Christianity, however they
 some-

The First Sermon:

II

sometimes come to be hearers of it.

But as the Great *Philosopher* heretofore when he opened his *School of Morality*, and began his *Lectures* with the same reflections I am now making, excluded all vicious and even young men from his *Auditory*; Esteeming it in vain for him to spend his time in instructing those who were either already engaged in a Course of Sin, or otherwise by the bent and heat of their Age strongly inclined and tempted to it: So may I certainly, with much greater reason, say with reference to our *Gospel*, That to such as these, all our *Addresses* will signify but very little. Nor can we reasonably expect men should become such Proficients as we desire, by our exhortations to Piety, till they will begin seriously to dispose their minds to the practice of it.

Aristot.
Eth. Nic.
lib. 1. c. 1.

To preach to a soft *Voluptuary*, the severe Doctrines of *Mortification*, and *Self-denial*; to an *Angry* and *Impatient* Spirit, to bear *Injuries*, not to recompence to any Evil for Evil; to forgive, nay, to love his Enemies: To the Covetous Miser, to Give Alms of such things as he has; and make himself friends in Heaven, by the wise distribution of his *unrighteous Mammon* upon Earth; what is this but

Rom. xii.
17.
Mat. v. 44.
Luke xi.
41.
— xvi. 9.

to

The First Sermon.

to plow the sand : to sow your seed upon the water ? They look upon the Doctrine to be senseless and unreasonable, and the Gospel of Christ foolishness indeed, if it expects they should obey such kind of Precepts as these.

1 Co. i. 18,
21, 23, 25.

John vii.
17.

What therefore our *Blessed Saviour* once said with reference to his own preaching, I must here beg leave to apply to ours : *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self. If any man will do God's will; if he will sincerely resolve to apply himself to the practice of Religion, then he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether we speak of our selves : He shall be fit and prepared to judge of what we speak, whether they are our own words, or the Gospel of Christ, and the Words of Eternal Salvation, that we deliver unto*

Luke viii.
14.

you. But till these thorns are first rooted out ; (i. e.) according to the explication which our *Saviour* gives us in this very Parable ; till men have overcome their affections to the Cares, the Pleasures, the Riches of this World, 'tis in vain to expect that any thing we can say should be able to prevail with them to bring forth fruit unto perfection, and such

as

as

The First Sermon.

13

as may carry them to everlasting Happiness in the next. But,

4thly, And to close this first point; A fourth sort of Hearers there are, who profit nothing by our preaching, and those yet worse than any I have hitherto mention'd, viz. the Malicious Hearers.

A sort of Men, who come to our Churches now, as the Scribes and Pharisees were wont sometimes to do to our Saviour's Discourses, not to improve themselves, but, if they can, to intangle us in our Talk.

Mat. xxii.
15.

I shall not need to say, that such Auditors as these are not likely to be much benefited by what they Hear. This is not what themselves aim at: their business is only to find faults, to lie in wait for any thing that they may but be able to make an ill use of, and like to some venomous Creatures, to suck poison out of the most wholesome Flowers. If a word, or an expression chance to fall from the Preacher which they think for their purpose, that is sure to be turn'd and scann'd to the uttermost: And though the meaning was never so innocent, yet 'tis great odds but by a false conjunction of things with one another, by a convenient alteration, and an uncharitable representation

The First Sermon.

tion, it shall be set forth to the World as some heinous Crime.

And were they always our Open Enemies that did this, we should have the less reason to complain of them. We know their *Principles*, and what a liberty it is their *Religion* gives them, by any means to defame and abuse those whom their *Church* thinks fit to put the greatest abuse of all upon, in calling them *Hereticks*. But for men pretending to be our Friends, and our Brethren, to do the same thing; to bow the knee, and cry, *Hail Master, and betray us*, this is a piece of treachery that we cannot chuse but lament, and heartily beseech God may never be laid to their charge.

I shall not much labour to correct such *Auditors*, by shewing how mean and scandalous such a practice is: How contrary not only to all the *rules of Religion*, but even of common *Honesty and Humanity*. No, rather let them come and search us with all their industry; What is their *Sin*, will be our *Justification*. Nor could we desire any thing better, were it not in *charity* to their Souls, than by defying even malice it self to find any just cause of Exception against us, to manifest the more clearly to the World

The First Sermon.

15

World the Innocency and Excellency of our Holy Religion.

There is nothing here done or said, but what we could be glad all the World were conscious of. We have no *mystery of Iniquity* to palliate, or to conceal. Our Religion and our Selves are everywhere the same. What we *preach* to you in the *Pulpit*, we speak to you in private; and, if occasion be, we *publish* it to all the World. Our *Sermons*, our *Writings*, our *Conversation*, are all of a piece. We have not one *Doctrine* to *whisper* to those that are *initiated*, and another to *seduce* those that are not.

It is not therefore for our own sakes, that we complain of this fault in any of our *Auditors*. Were that the motive, could we be so wicked as to deliver any thing to you in *God's* name, and as his *Gospel*, that we fear'd all the World should become privy to, yet were it sufficient to know what kind of *Hearers* we sometimes have, to make us at least *Wise as Serpents*, if not *Harmless as Doves*. But though we are therefore sufficiently secure as to our own *Innocence*, yet we cannot but be concern'd for our *Brethren's* sin. And beseech them, that they will at last be so kind to their own Souls

Mat. x. 16.

as

The First Sermon.

as to consider how great the danger and sinfulness of such *Hearing* is; what a dishonour it brings to our *Holy Religion*, what a stop it puts to their *Edification* now, and how fatally ruinous it will finally prove to their everlasting Salvation hereafter.

But it is time for me to go on to the other part of this Discourse; that so having hitherto discover'd what the general Faults of our *Hearers* are, that so much indispose them to receive that benefit they ought by our *preaching*, I may now shew

Idly, What Qualifications are required in such a One as will profit himself by these kind of Instructions.

Many are the *Qualifications* of this kind that might be offer'd; but I think the principal of them may be very well reduced to these *four*, and which I shall therefore particularly consider: *viz.* That he who will dispose Himself to become a profitable *Hearer* of these *Holy Instructions*, must

1st, Be

The First Sermon.

17

1st, Be *Pious*.

2^{dly}, *Docile*.

3^{dly}, *Diligent*. And

4^{thly}, Earnest in his *Prayers* to God Almighty, to bless his Word to him, and to teach him to profit by it.

1st, He must be *Pious*.

This, I have before observed, the very *Philosophers* required in the *Auditors* of their *Morality*: and sure it will be then so much the more necessary in our *Hearers*, by how much the Rules and Precepts of the *Christian Religion* are higher, and more repugnant to the *sinful Lusts* and *Interests* of Men, than what they taught.

Andronic.
Rhod. Par.
Eth. Nic.
l. i. cap. 4.

Hence we find our Saviour *Christ* Himself to have resolved the Cause of the *infidelity* of the *Jews* into the indisposition of their Hearts, for want of probity and goodness to receive his *Gospel*. They were engaged in a Course of *Pride* and *Vain glory*; they courted the praise and applauses of the People, and they could not endure to hearken to a *Religion* that would not support their *vanity*, nor preserve to them the Respect and Honour of the World, which they valued more than the Praise and

C

Glory

Jo. v. 44.

Glory of God. *How can ye believe (says he.) that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?* John v. 44. And again,

Jo. xii. 42, 43.

ch. xiith. the Holy Apostle tells us, *That among the chief rulers also many believed on Christ, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.* And in general, our Saviour Christ

Jo. viii. 47.

says, ch. viii. *He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* Where we find not only the true Character of him who will be a profitable hearer of God's word, viz. that he must be of God, as that Phrase is opposed to what our Saviour had just before said of those men, ver. 44. *That they were of their father the devil, and followed the lusts of him; i. e.* He must be an honest and upright man, endued with such a Probity and Sincerity as becomes a Child of God; but also the reason why others are not qualified to receive the Gospel, viz. That they are of a temper of mind averse from holy things, and therefore not fit to profit themselves by the hearing of them: *Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not*

The First Sermon.

19

not of God. And St. John himself in his 1st Epistle, iv. 6. gives the same for the reason why their Preaching, as well as *Christ's*, had so little effect upon some Men; *We are of God: He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us.*

1 Joh. iv.
ver. 6. col.
cum vers.
4, 5.

And indeed, how can it possibly be, that a man who is not inclined to *Piety* himself, should be a fit Auditor of a *Gospel*, whose great end it is to promote it?

1st. He is *averse* to it; he has no relish of what is spoken, nor can endure to hear his *Lusts* and *Affections*, his beloved *Vices*, and darling *Sins* set forth as things that must either be abandoned here, or they will render him for ever miserable. And therefore our Saviour in the same St. John, tells us, that this shall be one part of the *worlds condemnation*, *that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

Johu iii.
19, 3.

2dly. All the *Arguments* that can be offered for such a one's conviction, stick not at all upon him; they are as unsuitable to his apprehension, as if you

The First Sermon.

would feed a *Lion* with *Hay*, or entertain an *Ass* with a *Theorem*. He has no sense of their force, nor is therefore at all like to be perswaded by them.

To talk to a viciously inclined man; of the baseness and odiousness of his sins, what is this, but in his opinion to argue against his sense and experience? To represent to him the reasonableness, the pleasure, and comfort of living well, what is it else, but to maintain a *Paradox*, and shew a great deal of Skill, only to demonstrate how much may be said for the most incredible things? *Heaven* is a place which cannot raise his desires, who has not thoughts purified enough to be in love with innocent and spiritual delights. The pleasures of those happy Regions are not suited to the sensual apprehensions of such men, as know no attractives, but those of a *Mahumetan Paradise*: And *Hell* it self, tho the most formidable consideration of any, yet such as for that very reason, he will be sure to put as far from him as he can; and either fancy that perhaps there is no such place, or if there be, yet hope it will be time enough hereafter to provide for the escaping of it.

3. And then lastly, for that which is the great end of all religious instructions, the Practice of Piety, and without which, all our knowledg in the *Mystery of Godliness* will be in vain; this is what such a one is yet more indisposed to, than all the rest. There are many in the world, who can be content to applaud the reasonableness of Piety and Virtue, and will allow of all that we can say in praise of it, that yet when it comes to the trial, cannot endure to put it in practice. Like the *Ground* over-run with *Thorns* in the *Parable*, they receive the Word with gladness, but the *Cares of the world, and the Pleasures of life, choke the seed*, so that they seldom bring forth any Fruit unto perfection.

It is therefore absolutely necessary, that he who will be a fit Disciple for the *school of Christ*, should first dispose himself by a *Probity* and *Integrity of mind*, to be willing to follow his Instructions. That he labour sincerely to have a *Conscience void of offence, both towards God, and towards man*. That he come to our Religious Exercises with a *Pious Mind*, not to please his *Fancy*, or gratifie his *Curiosity*, but to learn true *Wisdom*, and that in order to *Practice*.

Acts xxiv
16.

The First Sermon.

Instead of considering how the Discourse is managed, whether the *Preacher* performs his part as he expected he should, he must employ his Thoughts on more substantial *Meditations*: In what particular especially the Discourse came up to his own condition, and how he may best apply it thereunto. If any *Vice* were reformed, whether his own Sin be not concerned in it. If any *Duty* explain'd or encouraged, whether that were not directed by God, to inform his Knowledge, or to reprove his remissness. If it set forth any of the great *Mysteries* of our *Redemption*, or the *Glories* of *Heaven*, and what we must do to attain to them; to remember that in all these things, God calls upon us to acknowledge his Power, and to celebrate his Goodness, who has sent so wonderful and gracious a salvation to us.

This is the true way whereby the *Pious Christian* may profit himself, even by the meanest of our *Discourses*; but without such a disposition to receive Instruction, the best *seed* will in vain be cast away upon us.

2dly. The next qualification required in a *Christian Auditor*, as well as in all others, is, That he be *Docile*.

By

By which I do not mean, Endued with quick Parts and Abilities to learn; that is the *Gift of God*, and which sometimes may do more harm than good; but I mean, that he be desirous of Instruction, and to that end prepared with such a temper and disposition of mind, as to be willing and ready to pursue the means of it. And to this end more particularly,

1st. That he be *Humble*, i. e. neither vainly conceited of himself, as if he had no need of instruction; nor esteeming himself to be too great to receive it, even from the meanest *Preacher*.

There is nothing in the world so great an Enemy to our Proficiency in any thing, as *Pride*: When men look upon themselves as too great to learn, and as such, neglect and despise the means of Instruction. Indeed I am not so vain, as to think that we are not many times called to speak to those who are much fitter to become our *Teachers*. But yet neither can I so far undervalue the *Gospel of Christ*, which we deliver unto you, as to believe there is ordinarily any *Sermon* so mean and despicable, but that an *humble* mind might have profited by it, and have found somewhat at least to

The First Sermon.

exercise his *Charity* and his *Patience*, if not to excite his *Zeal*, and improve his *Knowledg*.

2. A second thing required to this *Docility*, is, That a man be free from *Passion*.

This disturbs the mind, and blinds the reason, and hinders many times the best Doctrine from producing any suitable effects upon us.

Those who are subject to the command of their own *affections*, judge more according to the *inclinations* of them, than to the *dictates* of right reason. He that espouses a Party or Interest, that loves an Opinion, and desires it should be true, easily approves of whatsoever does but seem to make for it; and rejects, almost at all adventures, whatsoever appears against it. How does the *Hope* and *Desire* of Honour, or Favour, or Fortune in the World, carry men away to the vilest things for the prosecution of it? And so all the other *Passions* of the mind; whether it be fear or pleasure, or whatever else be the *affection* that rules us, they hinder the *reason* from judging aright, and weighing impartially what is delivered to us; and 'tis great odds, but such an *Auditor* receives or condemns the

the Doctrine of Christ, not according as the *Authority of Holy Scripture*, and the *Evidence of right reason* require he should, but as his own *Passions and Inclinations* prompt him to do.

3. A Third thing required to *Docility* is; That a man be free from *Prejudice*.

He that will advance any thing in the finding out of *Truth*, must bring to it that *Travellers indifference* which the *Heathen* so long since recommended to the World: He must not *desire* it should lie on the one side rather than the other, lest his *desire* that it should, prompt him without just reason to believe that it does.

And so in *Religion* too: He that will make a right judgment, what to *believe*, or what to *Practice*, must first throw off all *prejudice* in favour of his own *Opinion*, or against any others: And resolve never to be so tied up to any *Point* or *Party*, as not to be at all times ready impartially to examine whatsoever can reasonably be objected against either.

How far the want of this does at this day divide the *Church of Christ*, I would to *God*, we had not too great reason on
all

The First Sermon.

all sides to complain. There are many among us so strangely engaged by *false principles* to an ill cause, that 'tis in vain to offer them the *clearest Arguments* to convince them.

If you bring them *Scripture*, 'tis true that must be heard, but then be it never so *plain* they are not competent *Judges* of the *Meaning* of it: and they durst not trust their own *Interpretation* to tell them that *Abraham begat Isaac*, if the *Church* should think fit to expound it otherwise. For such and so plain are many of those passages that we alledg against them, to shew their corruptions in a great part of those things wherein they differ from us.

If you offer them *Reason*, as clear as the plainest *Demonstration*; why, that were well: But still *Private Reason* may *Err*, and the *Church* cannot.

Convince them by their *Senses*, which one would think should convince any body; Desire them to consult the *Verdict* of their own *Eyes*, and *Mouths*, and *Noses*, and *Feeling*: 'tis no purpose, the *Senses* may deceive them, but the *Church* cannot.

Thus have they suffer'd themselves to be conjured into a *Circle* out of which
'tis

'tis impossible ever to Retreive them. *Sense, Reason, Scripture*, All are of no force against this one Prejudice of their *Churches Authority*; though at the same time they know not ~~either~~ what the *Church* is to whom *Christ* Promises are made, nor where to find it, nor what it has decided, nor wherefore they at all Adventures attribute to their *own* the *Tit*le of the *only true Church*.

Such *Hearers* as these, are *Unteach*able, and *Unprofitable*: And we ought certainly by their *Example* to beware of such an indisposition as is able to lead men into so strange a *Slavery*; and make them believe they are never more in the *Right*, than when they have put themselves out of a *Capacity* of ever being so upon any *Certain* grounds, and otherwise than by *meer Chance*.

4. A *Fourth* and last thing required to *Docility*, is a freedom from *Obst*nacy.

This is a disposition for the most part consequent upon that I the last mentioned, and such as wherever it is found, renders a man utterly incompetent to receive any benefit by the best instruction, It is called by *St. Paul* *ὁ ἀδόκιμος*, a *Rom. i.* *reprobate mind*, *Rom. i. 28. a mind void* 28.
of

of judgment. When men resolve they will not be instructed, but affect ignorance; and either to keep up a faction, or to serve their present Interests, or to indulge themselves the more freely in their sins, flee both the means and the desire of knowledge.

And this, or somewhat like it, is again the Case of those of the other *Communion*. Who not content with the *Prejudices* I before mention'd in favour of themselves and their own Opinions: do moreover engage their proselites by a most *Solemn Oath*, never upon any account, or by any *Argument whatsoever*, to be drawn out of those Errors in which they have engaged them.

See Pontif. R. Ordo ad reconcil.
Hær.

Such then is the *Nature*, and these the Vices that are to be avoided by us, in order to the *second Qualification* required in a *Christian Auditor*, viz. *Docility*.

3. The next I mention'd was, That he must be *Diligent*.

By which I mean, not only a carefulness to attend upon all the publick means of instruction which God is pleased to afford us; but yet much more, to apply those means to a right and due End. To be sedulous and diligent in embracing the Opportunities of *hearing*, is indeed

deed very commendable, and the duty of every Christian; but yet if his *diligence* stop here, he may for all that reap but little benefit by all his Care. He that will be truly *sedulous*, as he ought to be, Let him,

1st. When he comes to these *Holy Exercises*, be very careful that he attend with all his Soul to what is deliver'd; But especially if any thing chance to be spoken in which his *Conscience* tells him that he was either altogether *Ignorant* before, or not sufficiently instructed in it.

2^{dly}, When he has done this, Let him be careful to take the first opportunity to retire within himself, and call to remembrance the things that he has Heard: And either by writing, or some other way let him provide for the future preservation of it. But especially,

3^{dly}, Let him employ his utmost *diligence* in the *Practice* of what he hears: Let him consider that this is the great end to which all his *Knowledge* in the *Mystery* of *Godliness* is to be referr'd: And that without this, he shall become but the more inexcusable for all the rest; For he who knows his *Master's will*, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

Luke xii.
47.

it

The First Sermon.

It was for this that God sent his *Son* to *Preach* his *Gospel* to the World; And 'tis for this that we still are commission'd by him to declare to you your duty, and press you with the strongest Arguments, the Hopes and Terrors of *Eternity*, to be careful and sedulous in the performance of it. The End of *Christianity* was not to *puff us up*, but to *Edifice us*: To make us *Better* rather than more *Knowing*, and more *Knowing* only that we may be *Better*. They are not the *Hearers* of the *Word* that shall be justified before God, but the *doers* of it. It is but a half *Diligence* that carries men to Learn their *Duty*; He is the truly *Sedulous* Christian indeed who both seeks with all earnestness to know what God requires of Him, and then as carefully endeavours to put it in practice.

Now to this end, and to conclude all,

4thly, He that will *Hear* as he ought to do, must to all these other *Qualifications* add his fervent *Prayers* to God for his Assistance.

It is not an easie matter to become a Perfect *Christian*: So high and excellent are the precepts of the *Gospel*, and in many things so contrary to the *Interests* and

The First Sermon.

31

and *Inclinations* of sensual Men; that without some extraordinary Assistance of the *Grace* of God, we are not able so much as to *comprehend* any thing of these kind of instructions as we ought to do. But to bring a willing and ready disposition of mind to receive the *Word*; to become such an *Auditor*, as not only *speculatively* to learn the great *Truths* of *Christianity*, but to resolve *effectually* to put them in *practice* too; this must certainly be the work of God upon our *Hearts*, and 'tis his *Grace* alone that can both *enlighten* our *Understandings*, and *incline* our *Wills*.

And here therefore we may see at once, both the necessity of this last *disposition*, our *Prayer* to *God* for his *Grace*; and in that, the true cause why so many make no better an Advantage by their *Hearing*. They come to the *Church* as if they were going into a *Theatre*, where they had nothing to do but to attend to what is spoken, to render them every way competent *Auditors* of it.

But alas! The *Divine Truths* that are here deliver'd, are above the discernment of the *Carnal mind*: *Spiritual things* must be *Spiritually understood*: Such *Auditors*

1 Cor. 13.
14.

as

Acts. xvi.
14.

Luke. xi.
13.

as these, like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* among the *Jews*, may hear our words as they did our Blessed Saviour's ; but they will not be at all the better for them. God *must open their hearts*, as he did that of *Lydia*; and then our addressees will find a suitable admittance, and not pass without a due and careful consideration. And our *Prayers to God* must obtain *this*, *Who will not fail to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*

And now, How shall we wonder, if the *seed*, though never so carefully sown, produce yet but a very mean increase, when God knows for the most part the Ground is so utterly unprepared to receive it ? This certainly is a consideration that ought to engage every good *Christian* seriously to search and examine himself, how he is disposed to become a fitting *Hearer* of the *Gospel* of *Christ*.

If you have therefore hitherto come to our *Assemblies*, without such a due Preparation as you see is thus necessary to qualifie your minds to receive that benefit you ought from these *Instructions*, let me now earnestly beseech you no longer to deceive your own Souls, but to prepare them in such a manner that our *Preaching* may not be in vain

vain to you. Let not any little, unworthy designs accompany you to these *Holy exercises*; But come as befits Christians, with *Charity*, with *Humility*, with an *Honest* and *Upright* Heart; sincerely desirous of understanding your Duty, how mean soever the person be that is to deliver it unto you.

But above all come with a firm resolution of *Practising* what you *Hear*. Remember that 'tis this *Christianity* designs in all its instructions; And however our *Zeal* in these latter days seems unhappily engaged, more in the Pursuit of *Divine Truth*, than in what I could rather wish we did chiefly aim at, the *Practice* of a *Divine Life*; yet let us be careful so to maintain the One, as not to prejudice or overthrow the other.

And if we thus sincerely direct all our *Hearing* to the *Glory* of *God*, and our own *Everlasting Salvation*, we shall not fail to *Hear* as we ought to do. *God* will *open* our *Ears*, and *illuminate* our *Understandings*, and *dispose* our *Wills*. The seed that is *Sown* upon *such Ground*, shall not fail to *Spring* up into a *Blessed increase*; And produce those *Fruits* of *Holiness* in *this life*, which shall final-

D

ly

The First Sermon.

ly bring us to the *Everlasting Joys and Glories* of the next.

*Which God of his Infinite Mercy
vouchsafe unto us, through the
merits of his Son Jesus Christ our
Lord. To whom. &c.*

O F

OF THE
BENEFIT and PRACTISE
OF
CONSIDERATION.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at
WHITE-HALL,
Before the
Princes of *DENMARK,*
Febr. 26. 1687.

DEUT. XXXII. 29.

*O that they were wise, that they
understood this, that they would
consider their latter end!*

THE Words are part of that great
Song which *Moses* spake unto all
the *Congregation* of *Israel* imme-
diately before his *Death*, and by God's
D 2 express

See chap.
xxi. 19,
30.

express Command left with them as his last and best Legacy to them and their Posterity for ever.

A *Song* both in its self so considerable, and so highly esteem'd by them, that they thought no words could be sufficient to set forth its Excellency: Inso-much, that we find it at this day characterised by the *Jews* of our own times,

‡ עיקר וכלל כל החורח as † the foundation and
See Munster and Fagius on v. 1. summary of the whole Law.
 of this Chapter. Crit. M. Vol. 1.

In the Verses before the *Text*, we have a sad and terrible declaration of those *Judgments* that should hereafter befall them for their *Impenitence*. And it is not to be question'd, but that this great *Prophet*, from whom God never conceal'd any thing that concern'd that people; had here by so much a more particular prospect of those *Evils*, that were afterwards to come upon them, as he was now the nearer to be taken from them. And that 'tis from these therefore, that we must derive at once both the *Occasion* and *Importance* of that passionate Wish into which the Holy Man here breaks out, in consideration both of their danger and of their insensibility of it,

O that

The Second Sermon.

37

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !

Whether by their *latter end* we are to understand that great and terrible destruction which finally beset both themselves and their Country, in the loss of *Jerusalem* : Or , Whether with some , we shall interpret it of God's *rejecting* of them from his *Covenant*, from being what they were once, his own peculiar Inheritance : Or , Whether lastly , the more to heighten the *Idea*, we shall join them both together in the *Prophecy*, as they were by God united in the *Execution* ; certain it is, That a greater and more amazing instance of the Divine Vengeance upon a particular *Nation*, has hardly been known from the beginning of the World, than that of their Destruction ; nor shall there I suppose be any Parallel, to the very end of it.

But it is not my design to enter on any reflection of their Punishment, but to enquire rather what it was, that *Moses* here so much wishes they would have done, in order to the preventing of it ; what that great defect was, which was the *Cause* of all their *Evils*.

D 3

Now

The Second Sermon.

Now that in one word was *Inconsideration*: A fault certainly very great in that people, than which none had ever received more clear and sensible Proofs of the Divine Power and Goodness. They had seen the *Miracles* by which God had brought them up out of the Land of *Egypt*; and continued to conduct them now almost forty years through the *Wilderness*. They had beheld his *Majesty*, when himself in that terrible manner that we read in the xixth and xxth Chapters of *Exodus*, vouchsafed to give them his own *Law* from *Mount Sinai*. Nay, that nothing might be wanting to awaken a stupid and insensible people, they had known his *Judgments* too in the punishment of their Sins. They had seen the Destruction which their Fathers had suffer'd, and they were here expressly foretold what Evils themselves and their posterity should hereafter undergo for their impiety. Yet was not all this sufficient to awaken their *Consideration* to a sense of their danger, and a care to prevent it.

And now I would to God these *Jews* were the only men we could justly charge with this neglect; and that our own indifferency in the concern of our duty,

duty, did not equally tax us with the same *Inconsideration*. But alas ! I fear, were we here to enter on a review, we should find but too just a parallel, both in our *danger*, and in our *incogitancy*: And that a very little reasoning upon the *Methods* of God's *Providence*, without the help of a Prophetick Spirit, might be more than enough, to make any sober, *considering* man tremble to think what shall be the consequence of such a general *Insensibility* as we have these many years shown, notwithstanding all his *Mercies* and his *Judgments* in vain made use of to reclaim us. At least, I hope it will be abundantly sufficient to Apologize for me, if I beg leave, especially at such a *Season* as this, freely to expostulate with you in the words of *Moses* in the *Text* :

O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that you would consider your latter end !

In speaking upon a Subject, both in its self so important, and to us so necessary ; that I may, if possible, not omit any thing that may serve either to excite or to direct the practice of it, I shall endeavour with all the plainness I can, to discourse to you of these Four Things.

The Second Sermon.

Ist. Of the *Danger* and *Mischief* of *Inconsideration*.

IIdly, I will enquire into the *Causes* of it.

IIIIdly, I will offer some General Rules for the Practice of *Consideration*.
And

IVthly and *Lastly*, Will close all with some *Motives* that may serve to stir you up to the discharge of your duty, in so great and important an instance of it.

I begin with the *First* of these.

I. Of the *Danger* and *Mischief* of *Inconsideration*.

It has been the usual *Method* of most *Casuits*, in enquiring into the *Causes* of *Sin*, to expose the *Mischief*, and aggravate the *Danger* of those particular *Temptations* that are the immediate occasions of it.

Hence there is hardly a man so little instructed in *Morality*, that has not learnt to run into an invective against the *Interests* and *Pleasures*, the *Honours* and *Riches* of this world; that the good Christian must resolve either to abandon them as much as is possible, or at least,

The Second Sermon.

41

least, to quit all undue Esteem, and inordinate Desire of them.

But the great and Catholic Cause of all our evils, *Inconsideration*; this is either not at all, or but very lightly touch'd upon by them. So far are men from exposing the *Danger* of it, that I believe there are few who have yet learnt to place it in the number of their *Temptations*, or that think themselves at all concern'd to provide against it.

Very necessary therefore it is, before I proceed to those particular Proposals I am hereafter to make for the removal of this evil, that I should first convince you of the necessity there is of setting about it; to show you, that of all the *Artifices* of the *Devil*, this has been the most successful; that whatsoever strength any other *Temptations* may seem to have, 'tis all derived from the influence of this. In a word, That *Riches*, and *Honour*, and *Pleasure*, and *Interest*, seduce some particulars only; triumph over the weakness of some certain dispositions that are more peculiarly apt to be moved by them. But that *Inconsideration* is a general snare, stops not at particulars, but carries all before it: The *One*, *Last*, *Universal Cause* of all our *Sins* being

The Second Sermon.

being no other than this, That we do not *consider* as we ought, what our *Duty* is, and what our *Obligations* are to the *Practice* of it.

And 1st. It cannot be denied, but that this *Inconsideration* exposes us to every *Temptation* which the *Devil* shall think fit to lay in our way; is very often the *Cause* that we are tempted at all, but always the reason that we are overcome by the *Temptation*.

I shall not need to say how many *Sins* men fall into, for want of *considering*, and knowing that they were so. I would to God the frequent *Excuses* that are drawn from this *Topick*, did not too fully shew, how great a *cause* this is of our *offending*. There is hardly a more general *Plea* in the mouth of every *Sinner*, than that he meant no harm in what he did, but either he did not know, or he did not think that it was unlawful. But then I am sure we must resolve to lay aside this excuse altogether, and confess it to be as false, as indeed it is, for the most part frivolous; or we must be allowed to conclude from it, that this want of *Consideration*, exposes men to infinite *Temptations*, by keeping them in an unwarrantable

able *Ignorance* of what they might have known, and ought to have *Consider'd*.

But they are not only the *Ignorant* that are concern'd in this danger. He who knows his Duty the best, is yet oftentimes no less surprized by his *Inco-
gitancy*, than he who is the most *Ignorant* of it. The *Devil* who knows our weakest times, and constantly watches his advantage, never fails then especially to assault us, when he sees we are least upon our Guard, and by consequence least in a condition to resist him. And if by a diligent care of our selves and attention to our Duty, we are not as ready and prepared to resist those *Temptations* which may be apt to sollicit us from it, as we are otherwise well instructed in the duty its self, 'tis evident, that our *Enemy* will have a very great advantage against us; and 'tis odds if for want of being prepared to *fight*, we are not for the most part overcome by him.

For 2^{dly}, And which may be alone sufficient to confirm my assertion, that 'tis our *Inconsideration* that is the real, ultimate *Cause* of all our sin; be it observed, secondly; That there are in our *Religion*, such *Motives*, such *Engagements* to *Obedience*, that were they but duly weighed

The Second Sermon.

weighed, it would be impossible for a man ever to live wickedly.

And indeed he must be a very great instance of this defect I am now speaking of, and never have *considered* any thing at all of his Religion as he ought to do, that can reasonably doubt of what I now say.

Is there any among us that has but once seriously reflected on the *Nature of God Almighty*: How excellent his *Goodness* is, how *Terrible* his *Justice*? With what an irreconcilable hatred he prosecutes *Sin* and *Sinners* for its sake? That he is *Omnipotent*, and cannot be *Resisted*: *Omniscient* and cannot be deceived: Nay that he is *Present* with us, sees our most retired actions, and will one day bring them all to light in presence of the whole World, in the *day when He shall judge the world in righteousness*. Is there any one here, that has but seriously *consider'd* all this? Let him then say whether it were Possible for the Devil to have been able to draw him into Sin, whilst he had such thoughts as these present to his mind to oppose to his *Temptations*?

But *Christianity* carries us yet farther. It shews us a *God Incarnate*, a *God made man*

The Second Sermon.

45

man on purpose for our Salvation ; *He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purchase to himself a peculiar people zealous of Good works.*

Titus ii.
11.

It represents to us a *Covenant of Grace*, Sealed with his own most precious *Blood*, and into which we have every one of us been solemnly initiated, that is, solemnly *Sworn* at our *Baptism* ; and the condition wherof on our part we know was this, *that we should forsake the Devil and all his works, the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh* ; and instead of serving these, should obediently keep *God's Holy will and Commandments*, and walk in the same all the days of our Lives.

I shall not now enquire, how often we have, I believe, the most of us renew'd this *Covenant*, whether in the *Church* at the *Holy Table*, or on other *Occasions* that have called us to put up our *Vows* to Heaven. Nor need I add, that 'tis to such a *Practice* alone as that requires, that *God* has promised the *Blessings of Eternal Glory*. But sure I am whosoever will but duly consider the weight and moment of this one Engagement, will find in it an impregnable fortress against *Sin*, and such as all the *Temptations* in the
World

The Second Sermon.

World should not be able to overcome.

For to reflect on it only in a Word or two. What is there in all our *sins*, or in all those *Temptations* that lead us to them, whose *Force* and *Power* would not be utterly overcome by this one serious *Consideration*?

Where is the *Lust* that can offer any sufficient, shall I say, or rather any tollerable inducement to comply with it, that may be worthy to compare with our obligations to *Love* and *Obey* so Great, and so Excellent a *Redeemer*? Is there a *Passion* so darling, or an interest so Valuable, that the most desperate sinner would in his Cool thoughts be willing to *exchange Heaven* for it? Or rather, for indeed that is the true Case, would be content for the prosecution of it to go down, it may be the next Moment, into *Hell*, and there dwell with *Everlasting Burnings*?

No, no: *Sin* may *deceive* us by our own carelessness, but it cannot stand before *Consideration*. It may surprize our *Passions*, but it can never reconcile its self to our *Reason*. Nor are our *Natures* yet become so degenerate, but that a due reflection on our Engagements to Obedience would by the *Grace* of God soon

The Second Sermon.

47

soon resolve into a performance of it :
And the *Hopes* of *Heaven*, and the *Terrors* of *Hell*; The *Vanity* of this *World*,
and the *Eternity* of the *Next*, once
thoroughly consider'd as they ought to
be, so stop our *Ears*, that all the *Arts* of
the *Charmer*, charm he never so wisely, Psal. lviil.
5.
should not be able to open them to his
Insinuations.

And for a farther proof of this, and
which may be yet another *Argument* to
confirm my *Position*, that 'tis the want
of *Considering* that is really the great
and last *Cause* of all our *Sin*: Let me
3dly, Appeal to the common *Practice*,
and *Experience* of *Mankind*: No sooner
does any one begin seriously to *Consider*
these things, but he presently becomes
a good *Christian*.

What is it else but this, that makes
the very worst of *Sinners* if they come
but into any danger or calamity; if any
sickness or affliction befalls them; any
thing that but stops them in their wild
Career so long as to give them only time
to cool, and to *Consider* their *Duty*, and
their great and dangerous deviations
from it; what is it I say, but this, that
makes these persons presently disclaim
their *Extravagancies*: to confess that
they

The Second Sermon.

they were mistaken in their notions of *Vertue* and *Vice*, and had therefore prefer'd the Interests of *the One* because they had either never known, or never sufficiently consider'd the excellency of *the Other*.

And if perhaps these Pious reflections have not been able afterwards to secure their *Obedience*, but they have again return'd to the follies they so lately renounced; It is not that they are ever the more convinced that they were over-reach'd in the Argument: That *Piety* and *Religion*, have not that reason on their side which we pretend, and which ought to engage them to the troublesome task of *denying themselves*, and forsaking all their *sensual pleasures*, and *worldly interests* for its sake: No, but only that their danger being removed, they have also lost their *Consideration* with it; and their *Incongruity* now again exposes them to those sins, which no sooner shall some new occasion call them again to reflect on, but they will be no less ready again to condemn them, than they were before.

And now though I suppose it may by this time be sufficiently evident how great the *Mischief* of *Inconsideration* is; yet,

yet for a final demonstration of its danger, I will offer one reflection more; and it is,

4. That whatever particular *Temptations* we may at any time chance to be exposed to, they would all of them have no force at all, but for this one General defect.

For let us not deceive our selves; *Pleasure* and *Riches*, and *Honour*, and *Interest*, and if there be any other *Vanity* besides that is yet more powerful than all these, they are not such omnipotent *Temptations* as our corrupt affections would represent them to us; on the contrary, 'tis certain that they have no force at all but by our own Incogitancy; to consider them only, were to overcome them.

1st. For *Pleasure*: Is it imaginable that the base Voluptuary would pursue that, as he does, did he really reflect what shall in a little time be the End of his Debauches? That yet a few years, at the most, it may be a few months, or days, and all his *Enjoyments* shall cease; and his *Pleasures* be exchanged for Pain and Sickness, Impotence and Infirmary, and the rest of those Torments in this Life, that are usually the sad forerunners of his *Eternal Punishment* in the other?

E

2^{dly}, For

The Second Sermon.

2dly, For *Riches* ; the next instance : Were it possible men should take so much Care and Labour to get them , and when they have got them, neither be satisfied with them themselves, nor do good to others, had they ever been acquainted with that *Treasure in Heaven* which the *Gospel* speaks of, so infinitely surpassing all the highest acquisitions here ; so much surer to be obtain'd, and for the most part so much easier too ; and when it is got, for Ever to be Enjoy'd ?

3dly, For *Honour*, the next *Temptation* : If there can be such a thing as *Honour* without *Virtue*, and that *High Places*, and *great Titles*, and the rest of those trifles that have so long usurped the *name*, may indeed be allow'd the *character* of it : What other judgment can any *considering* man pass upon such *Honour* but this ; That even *Christianity* apart, it must certainly be a very vain thing to *build* a man's *hopes*, and expend himself and his life, upon that, which when all is done, depends upon other mens opinions of, and value for us ; who too often give this *Honour* to the most undeserving Persons, and with whom the truly brave and worthy
Man

The Second Sermon.

51

Man sometimes finds the least share of it.

And then 4thly, for the *Interests* of *this World*; Good God! What can they appear to any serious, *considering* man, but meer *Vanity*, who has learnt of his *Saviour* to ask his *Conscience* that great and wise Question: *What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul?* Mat. xvi.
26.

Is it not Evident, that in all these, and whatever instances besides can be offered of the greatest *Temptations*, 'tis only for want of *Considering* that they prevail upon us; and so, that not they, but our own *Incogitancy* ought to be charged by us as our greatest *Danger* and *Mischief*, The one, last, universal *Cause* of all our *Sins*.

And now if this be so, then it cannot certainly but be very well worth our while to search a little,

Illy, Into the *Causes* of this *Inconsideration*, the next thing I proposed to speak to.

And the first, and perhaps the most fatal of all others, and which may serve to remove a very dangerous mistake

The Second Sermon.

we are apt to make in this affair is, That *Men* are wont to think they do very well *consider* these things, when in truth they do not *consider* them to any purpose at all.

For indeed, what is that which men now a days to call *Considering*? If they are sometimes a little serious, if they reflect now and then upon the business of *Religion*: If they go to *Church* on *Sundays*, and are not scandalously wicked the week after; If they receive the *Holy Sacrament* in its seasons, and when they do so, sit down a while and reflect a little, a day or two, it may be the week before, upon their *Sins* and their *Vanities*, and then *Sigh*, and are *Sorry*, and *resolve* to *Sin* no more, this they call *Considering*; and this, I fear, is what makes up the *Religion* of a very great number amongst us.

But alas! this is as far distant from that true *Consideration*, I would now recommend to you, as the little imperfect Effects of it, are for the most part inferior to that excellent Piety that would be the certain consequence of the other. 'Tis not every light reflection upon the business of *Religion*, that is worthy the name of a true *Consideration*.

He

He that will do this as he ought to do, must resolve to do it thoroughly : He must search to the very bottome of his Soul ; Not a Sin so secret, not a Lust or Interest so dear or profitable to us, but what, to the best of our power, must be enquired into. Now all the danger of *Sin in General*, all the black *circumstances*, and heightning *Aggravations* of our own Sins in *Particular*, must seriously be consider'd : The *Hopes* and *Terrors* of *Eternity* be thoroughly weigh'd ; What the *Goodness* of *God* is, if we will yet repent ; What his *Judgments* will be, if we shall continue to despise the Riches of his Mercy, and *Treasure* up to our selves *Wrath* against the day of *Wrath*. In a word , whatever may serve either to convince us of our *Sins* and of our *Danger*, or to engage us to forsake the one, that so we may escape the other, must all be laid before us ; till finally, by *God's Grace*, we are brought in the bitterness of our Souls, to such a sense of our Condition, as shall engage us to a sincere *Repentance* of our Sins, and *Obedience* to *God's Commands*. And so work in us that change of Life, which alone is able to save our *Souls* for ever.

He that gives off before he has done

E 3

this,

The Second Sermon.

this, He may have *thought* of his *Duty*, if you will, but he has not yet *consider'd* as he ought to do: He may have prepared the way, but he is yet to run. In short, He may have *consider'd* of *Religion* as many now a days do, who read the *Holy Scriptures*, run through all the various *Seëts* and *Parties* of *Christians*, who suffer not the least *Controversie* to escape them, nor a *Dispute* to arise in which they do not interest themselves; and yet when all is done, have not one jot of *real Piety* in their *Souls*: but after a great deal of pains get only that *knowledge* which *puffeth up*, and are yet to learn that *Charity* which *Edifieth*.

This is the first, and perhaps one of the most fatal Cheats men commonly put upon their Souls: They flatter themselves that they do very well *Consider* these things, when indeed they do not *consider* them to any purpose, nor as they ought to do it.

2. A Second Cause of mens *Inconsideration*, and but little inferior to the foregoing, either in the danger or the universality of it, is, That our *Consideration* is for the most part totally turned another way.

It is a long time since the generality
of

of Mankind seem to have fallen under a very dangerous mistake, That *Religion* ought not to be looked upon as their Business, but only as a thing by the by : somewhat to entertain their thoughts with upon solemn times, and in their Melancholly hours, but which 'twere unreasonable to expect amidst so great a plenty of other affairs, as the world now abounds with, should ordinarily be made the subject of their thought, and their Consideration.

Thus have we utterly reversed the *Maxim* of our Saviour, and made not our Salvation, but the business of this World, our Employments and our Interests, nay, Good God! our very Vices and our Sins the *Unum Necessarium*, the great thing to be taken care of by us : and we are so wholly taken up and engaged with these, that we have no leisure to think at all, to be sure not to any purpose, and as we ought to do of *that*.

And now, what wonder if when this is the Case, we see such very sad, 'tis true, but yet such very natural Effects of it ? Whilst men reckon the concerns of this present life to be the main of their business, we ought not to be surpris'd

The Second Sermon.

if they *consider* no more of what may make for a better.

Till this mistake be rectified, we may be troubled indeed to see men so *Inconsiderate*, but sure we ought not to admire it. We may with *Moses* wish, *O that they were wise, that they would understand this!* But till that be done, we cannot expect they should very much *Consider* their latter *End*.

But 3dly, Another *Cause*, and which I believe has kept very many from *considering* as they ought to do, is, That 'tis *Uneasie* to them ; and therefore they do not care to enter upon it.

It is a great disadvantage to *Religion*, that tho there be really nothing in the World more pleasing or more agreeable to our Rational Natures, than the practice of it; yet has it something that is rough and uneasie in the first setting out, and which the *habitual Sinner* cannot without pains and difficulty get over.

He that thrives by *Sin*, that grows *Rich*, or *Great*, or *Honourable* in the world, by Injury and Oppression, by Fraud and Flattery, will no doubt be very uneasie to embrace a *Religion*, that requires a Justice and Integrity in all our *actions*, that forbids all Violence and Rapine, all
Arti-

Artifice and Diffimulation; *i. e.* all those *Methods* by which he has been wont to encrease and flourish heretofore.

Again: If a man has been used freely to indulge himself in all that his heart desired; to gratifie his *Passions* in their wildest irregularities; he will no doubt find it a matter of no small difficulty to *deny himself*, and resist and do violence to those appetites, which he has been so accustomed to comply with heretofore.

So that in effect, whether out of a prevailing interest, or a real fear; whether out of an unwillingness to forsake sin, or a mistaken apprehension of the impossibility of overcoming it, Many, I believe, content themselves to go on without ever *considering* at all; and hate to reflect on what they are resolved never to reform.

Or, if perhaps this does not carry them so far, as to make them totally lay aside the thoughts of *Religion*, yet at least, it renders them unwilling to set about it, and so produces a

4th; And which is the last *Cause* I shall now mention, of that *Incogitancy* I am here complaining of; *viz.* That men are apt to *Procrastinate* this great
Affair;

The Second Sermon.

Affair ; They resolve they will one time or other *consider*, but never heartily and effectually do so.

This is certainly a very great, and yet I fear a very general fault ; and such as perhaps has ruined more souls than any one thing again in the whole world.

It is a hard matter totally to silence *Conscience*, and stifle all the thoughts of *Piety* and *Religion*. But our unhappiness is, that when we are thus put in mind of our duty, we either content our selves with some very slight and superficial *Consideration* of it ; or else we put off our *Consciences*, as *Felix* did *St. Paul*, to a more *convenient Season*.

Thus some refer these kind of thoughts to *Old Age*, and never come to it, but go down into the Grave, before they have made any just provision for it. Others, it may be, set it a shorter date, but then still some business or hindrance interposes, and then another time is fix'd, and that too is disappointed ; and thus our lives run on, but the great work of *Considering* is still to come. It may be at length God's *Grace* is withdrawn, and *Conscience* grows weary of being any longer importunate, when it has been so often denied. And thus when we thought

to have *consider'd*, we find neither will, nor strength, nor opportunity so to do.

How much the more earnestly may I beg leave to exhort you this day, no longer to defer so great, and to be sure so necessary a work as this; and to that end, that you will pass on with me to the *Third Point* I propos'd to speak to.

III. Of the *Practice of Consideration.*

The Sum whereof in *general* will appear from the resolution which I shall give to these Two *Enquiries*.

1st. *How*, or after *what manner*:

2^{dly}. *When*, or at *what times*, this is to be done by us.

1st. For the *former* of these; *how* we are to *practice* this *Consideration*? I reply, That we must do it by a serious and impartial Enquiry both into *our selves*, and into *our Religion*; by a diligent and strict examination, what our *Duty* towards God is, and what our own *Performances* have been, and ought to be of it.

1. As to the *former part* of this *Consideration*, *Our duty towards God*: I shall not need say any thing to shew how necessary this is to be well understood by us. I am persuaded there is no one, how negligent soever he may have been in his
per-

The Second Sermon.

performance of it, but what is sufficiently convinced of his obligations to it.

I will rather complain, that in a matter so necessary, that our *Eternal Salvation* depends upon it, and God be thanked so easie too, to the very meanest capacity, there should nevertheless so many continue in as utter an *ignorance* of it, as if we too were some of those who encourage a *blind Obedience*; and esteem an ungrounded *Assent*, to be the best *Faith*, and *Ignorance* indeed the *Mother of Devotion*.

It has been the fault of many in the practice of this kind of *Consideration*, to fix their thoughts wholly upon some parts of their *Religion*, but to take little or no notice at all of the rest. Thus many run away with the *Promises* of the *Gospel*, but never consider what they have to entitle them to those *Promises*. Others, on the contrary, look wholly on the difficulty of its *Commands*: and as if that had given them a final release from all endeavours to fulfil them, they conclude that 'tis impossible for them ever to be able to live as they ought to do, and that therefore 'tis in vain to try whether they can or no.

Some when they read the great, and no doubt

doubt very just *Elogies* of *Faith* in *St. Paul*, stop there, and never trouble themselves either to consider what that *Faith* is, which *S. Paul* speaks of, much less to go on to *St. James*, and there see the necessity of *good works* too. They sit down contented that they have a *right faith*: They are members of a *Pure, Reform'd Church* on the one hand; or else of an *unerrable, infallible, Catholick Church* on the other, and so all is secure: As if the espousing such or such an Interest or Party, were an unquestionable *mark* of *Election*, and all that God requires in order to our *Salvation*.

Many are the mistakes of this kind, which men are apt to fall into, in the Consideration of their *Duty*, and to all which I will only offer this one plain *Rule* for their direction: That whosoever will *consider* it as he ought, must do it *universally*, he must leave no part of his *Religion* unexamined; being assured of this, That whatsoever *Consideration* does any way contribute to lessen *Practice*, nay rather, does not very much serve to help and promote it, is false and imperfect; and if he stops there, will certainly deceive and ruin him in the end.

The Second Sermon.

2. For the other part of our Consideration, *our Selves*; two things there are, on which the *Practice* of it must chiefly terminate; *viz.*

1. What our *State* is, with reference to what is *past*?
2. How to govern our selves for the time to come?

It would require some longer time than I may presume to allow to this Discourse, but barely to enumerate the several *Rules* and *Cautions* to be observed in the doing of this. With what Care and Diligence, with what Exactness and Particularity; in a word, with what Piety and Sincerity we must proceed in all this; and search into the real *Grounds* we have, either to hope or fear, and accordingly give God the Glory, whether by a patient *continuance* in that Piety which we have hitherto practised, or by our *Repentance* for those sins we have unhappily committed.

This is a work which I have always thought the proper business of a *Casualist*, or if you will, of a *Confessor*, rather than a *Preacher*. General Rules seldom come up to particular mens conditions. Nor is it possible for the most exact Discourse, to give any satisfaction comparable to those

those directions which our *Church* therefore exhorts us to seek by a free opening of our Condition to some of those who are appointed by God to be our *Guides* in these matters.

And to them therefore let me beseech all those who are sensible of any want of farther Instruction in this matter, to address themselves for such Advice, as neither the Nature nor Limits of this Discourse, permit me to offer to them. As for the other thing proposed in order to the Practice of this Duty,

2dly, *When*, or at *what Times* this is to be done by us? If the question be concerning the last sort of *Consideration* I just now mentioned, that of our *Actions*; 'tis evident that this must be perpetual; because it has so necessary an influence upon all *Moral Actions*. The same Prudence which directs every wise man before he acts, to sit down and consider what he is going about, whether it be fit to be done by him, ought certainly yet much more to carry every good Christian to this farther necessary Reflection, Whether it may be done by him? And whosoever ventures upon any Action without this, he may by accident not do ill; but 'tis his good
For-

The Second Sermon.

Fortune, not his Praise, that he does not. And were it never so good, yet for want of doing it with that design, and knowing it to be such, he must not expect that God should ever *impute* that to him for *Righteousness*, which he himself did not design or perform with that intent.

Asto the other sort of *Consideration*, That of our *State*, and of our *Duty*: What God requires of us, and how we have lived according thereunto? Certain it is, that 'tis absolutely necessary that we should some time or other enter upon it; and then, I suppose, I need not say how very prudent it will be for us not to defer it. For since our *Life* is but a puff of breath, every *day* in our *Nostrils*, and which we can at no time say shall be our own the next moment: surely it will very much concern us not to defer *considering* how we are provided for another World, seeing we have so very little Hopes or security in this.

Repentance is not a Duty that can be discharged in a Moment, and I fear the best among us upon the enquiry will find that we stand in need of a very great one. Now there is no time, no place for *Repentance*, but only in this present Life: And should we suffer our In-
cogitancy

The Second Sermon.

85

cogitancy so far to prevail upon us, as to neglect it here, we shall in vain lament our sin and our folly to all Eternity hereafter.

If there be therefore any one among us, that has hitherto omitted so great and necessary a *Consideration*, what shall I say to him? Let him no longer defer it: Nay, but rather in the words of holy David, *Let him not go back unto his house, nor climb up into his bed; let him not suffer his eyes to sleep, nor his eye-lids to slumber, till he has begun to set about it.* Psal. 132.
3, 4.

It were, no doubt, very much to be wish'd, that men would not suffer any day to slip, without this *Consideration*. There is, I believe, but seldom a day passes, in which we are not guilty of something that may justly call for a particular *Repentance*, to obtain our forgiveness. And who can tell, if he lies down to sleep e're he has done this, whether he shall ever rise up to perform it afterwards?

But alas! This is the greatest Instance of all of our *Inconsideration*. And instead of repassing in this manner every day upon our Actions, I fear there are many who go on whole Weeks, and
F Months,

The Second Sermon.

Months, and Years, without ever thinking at all of it; as if it were enough to practice this *duty* by the same proportions which some of our modern *Casuists* have prescribed for that other of the *Love of God*; some of which have thought it necessary to be done only upon *Sundays* and *Holy-days*; others not above *once a year*; some once in *Five years*; others at any *one time* in our *whole lives*; and lastly, others *never* at all, either *living* or *dying*.

But tho' there be then no *time* so proper as the present, for the doing of that which cannot without the greatest danger be deferr'd the least moment; yet some *seasons* there are, which seem more especially to invite us to it.

Thus 1st. If *old Age* be crept upon us, or any *Sickness* or *Danger* threaten us with a speedy appearance before *God's Tribunal*; this ought certainly at the same time that it admonishes us of the shortness of our present life, to call us to an immediate providing for the next.

2. Tho' the hand of God be not just upon us, yet if we see his Arm lifted up to strike; if we have some just cause to apprehend any evils or afflictions likely to come upon us: much more if our

Coun.

The Second Sermon.

67

Country and our Church be in danger for the iniquity of her Children and People within her; this also may be another time that seems on purpose mark'd out to call us to *Consideration*; to think upon our ways, and how to prevent both our own, and the publick desolation.

But now, 3^{dly}. If these Evils are not merely apprehended, but are actually upon us; so that we already have begun to bear the punishment of our sins, and may have just cause to apprehend yet more dreadful effects of them; this certainly ought yet more strongly to engage us to such a Consideration.

In such circumstances as these, the worst of men naturally become Religious. God himself could say of the *Rebellious Israelites*, *That in their afflictions they would seek him early*. And the Prophet observed of all men in general, *That when God's Judgment are in the Earth, then the inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness*. Hos. v. 13.
Isa. xvi. 9.

I will only add, 4^{thly}, And with reference to the approaching season; That as the time of *Lent* has in all Ages of the Church been look'd upon as a season proper for the business of *Repentance*; so certainly we cannot better prepare for it,

The Second Sermon.

See the
Communica-
tion used
on Ash-
Wednesday.

than by the practice of this great Preliminary duty of *Consideration*, without which it will be impossible for us ever to discharge it as we ought to do. And however the *Godly Primitive Discipline* of *Publick Confession* and *Penance*, has for the hardness of our hearts, been of late laid aside among us; yet ought we not therefore to be ever the less, nay rather we should be the more careful to *examine* our own *souls*, and *call our ways to remembrance*; and by our *Private Diligence* make some supply of what seems to be acknowledged by our Church, as wanting to our *Publick Discipline*.

And to the end I may the better enforce this Practice, which upon all these accounts seems so very proper for us, I will now finally *Close* all,

IVthly, With some *Motives* that may serve to stir us up to the fulfilling of *our duty*, in so great and necessary a part of it.

I have already observed in the beginning of this Discourse, That 'tis the want of *Consideration* that is really the last, universal Cause of all our Sins. And I have just now shewn, That till it be removed, it will be impossible for us to repent

pent of them. And sure then one would think that nothing more need be said, to engage any sober man to the practice of it.

But I must now go yet farther : For to compleat our Obligation to so necessary a practice, *Inconsideration* is not only to be charged as the cause of all our evils, but the corrupter of our good too : It spoils our very vertues ; insomuch, that were it possible for the unthinking man to fulfil every Command, and not deviate in the least degree from the rules of his duty, all would be in vain ; his *Inconsideration* alone would ruin him, and his Virtues themselves lose by it not only their Praise, but their very Nature too : Would become at most, but mere indifferent Actions, neither worthy in themselves, nor deserving of any reward for the fulfilling of them.

God Almighty, who has given us our Understandings and our Wills on purpose for his *Service*, requires the concurrence of them in all our *Actions* that are intended for that purpose. His *Service* must be reasonable, or it will not be accepted. He is not to be pleased with what we do by chance ; where his Glory is not designed, he looks upon it, that neither

The Second Sermon.

is it advanced. And that good which is done without *Considering*, is but a mere *Natural Action*, deserves as little praise as a *Plant* for growing, or a *Stone* for falling down to its Center ; and we may as reasonably expect to see one of these promoted to Heaven for so doing, as the unthinking man be judged worthy of it, for any thing he can do.

But, 2^{dly}. This *Incogitancy* does not only render us thus obnoxious to God, but it exposes us to the censures of men too : It does not only deprive us of all our pretences to *Piety*, but even to common *Wisdom* and *Discretion*.

He that never *Considers* in any thing, all the World will say is a *Fool* ; and sure I may well add, That he who *Considers* only in little things, and never thinks in those that are of the highest importance, is not so wise as he should be. But to pretend to be *Christians*, and to desire *Salvation*, and yet never reflect what it is to be the One, or how we are to live that we may attain the Other ; this is certainly such a combination of Folly and Impiety, that were not sin as great an Enemy to *Reason*, as it is to *Religion*, 'twere impossible that any man should ever be guilty of it.

And

And now when so many engagements concur to recommend this duty, that 'tis impossible for us to approve our selves either to God or man without it, what shall I say more to stir you up to the practice of it?

I am, methinks, unwilling so far to comply with the melancholly apprehensions of very many, and those not altogether without just grounds too, as to desire you to think whether our Circumstances at this time, be not such as may well engage us in the literal import of our *Text*, to be wise, and consider our latter end, for ought I know, the final end of our selves and our Religion, if we do not by a speedy *Repentance* reverse that Judgment which God seems ready to pronounce against us for our *Incongruity*. I will rather close all with a more excellent engagement. Blessed be God, who has made this a *Duty* as pleasing as it is necessary; as apt to incite our practice, as 'tis fit to be practised by us. For certainly to *Consider* these things, after all the frightful *Idea's* men are apt to entertain of it, is not only one of the most useful, but one of the most pleasing things in the whole world.

The Second Sermon.

Let me appeal to the experience of those Pious Souls, who by a due performance of this Exercise, have their *Conversation* already in *Heaven*; are elevated above the little Passions and Interests that engage the busie part of mankind in so much labour and vanity. Who live in this World as if they were not of it; free and quiet in the midst of its disturbances; still the same in every estate; who love nothing but God and their Duty, fear nothing but to sin against him, nor desire any thing but to be *dissolved, and to be with him*. Whose well-grounded *Hopes* already secure them of their future Reward; and a *Good Conscience* so fully justifies them, that neither *Death*, nor *Hell* its self, nor any evils of this life, or any terrors of the other, are able to disturb the Peace and Calm that is within them.

O happy state! The blessed effect of a serious and frequent *Consideration*! Where is the Sinner that can pretend to say, he has ever found in any of his ways of Wickedness, a pleasure comparable to that Peace and Joy, which such a *Christian* meets with even in the present course of his Life?

Let

Let the *Miser* boast his *Riches*; The *Ambitious Man* his *Honours*; let the *Voluptuary* wallow in his sensual and beastly satisfactions: But ô Lord! What *Vanity* are all these when compared with the solid Comfort and Satisfaction of a Good *Conscience*: that can reflect freely upon its Actions; can search into the most secret parts of its Life with Joy and Assurance; and delight to compare its Duty and its Practice, and see how Gloriously the One illustrates and sets forth the Other.

Who would not pursue the Happiness of such a state, tho' there were no such thing as Heaven and Eternity to follow after? Certainly if *Pleasure* be that which is to govern our pursuits, 'tis the good Christian that, when all is done, is the only Wise Man; and to *Consider*, the most delightful practice of any in the World.

Only let us *Consider* seriously, and as we ought to do: Let us once in our lives be persuaded heartily to experiment a Duty, which we have been so often told should be the great Business of them. Let us be willing to be convinced; and do our *Religion* and our *Souls* so much justice, as to give these things

The Second Sermon.

things a fair and an Equal hearing.

So shall all those Blessings I have now been speaking of, descend upon us. We shall exchange only, not lose or lessen our Enjoyments. Whatsoever Pleasure or satisfaction we have heretofore met with in the ways of Sin, we shall find them all infinitely surmounted in the Practice of Religion. Till finally being fit for *Heaven*, ripe for *Immortality*, we shall be Translated from these Excellent, but yet still imperfect Joys here, to those absolute and Eternal Blessings, which neither Eye has seen, nor Ear heard, nor does it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive.

*To which God of his Infinite Mercy
vouchsafe we may all arrive, through
Jesus Christ our Lord.*

OF THE
D E V I C E S
O F
S A T A N.
A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at
WHITE-HALL,

April. 26. 1688.

2 C O R. II. 11:

*For we are not ignorant of his De-
vices.*

AMong all the parts of a Christian
Institution, which either the
Gospel of Christ directs, or we
as the Ministers of Christ, and your 2Cor.iv.5.
Servants for Jesus sake, Exhort you to;
there is none after the knowledg of
our

our Duty towards God, and what he requires of us in order to our *Eternal Salvation*, either more necessary to be well understood, or, would men seriously apply themselves to it, more easie to be attain'd by us, than how to Arm and Fortifie our selves against those *Devices* of *Satan*, whereby he continually Endeavours to *Seduce* us.

There are few so ignorant in this matter, but are able at least to trace out his most ordinary *Temptations*, and to discover what it is that the most usually *exposes* them to *Sin*. And though he has his *Crooked* and *by-paths* too, *Devices* both more subtilly laid, and more difficult to be discern'd; yet a little more vigilancy and care would serve to discover even these also, and to *bring to light the most hidden* Mysteries of Iniquity.

1 Cor. iv.
5.

But though there be then nothing more obvious to a sincere and inquisitive Mind, than to find out these *Artifices* of the *Devil*; yet alas! A sad experience shews us, that there is scarce any thing in the World in which men for the most part seem more to betray either their *Ignorance* or their *Inadvertency*; Whilst they suffer every the most *Ordinary Temptation* to overcome them, and scarce

an assault so weak can be made upon them, but what is sure to have its effect, and find them altogether unprepared to resist it.

To correct, if it may be, this careless and supine Temper, so dishonourable to God, and so dangerous to our own Souls; I shall Endeavour at this time to lay before you some of those *Methods* whereby the Devil is most wont to lead Men into Sin; That so knowing our danger, we may be the better able to Arm our Souls against it, *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; For we are not ignorant of his devices.*

The *Occasion* of which *Words* was this.

St. Paul having in his former *Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, commanded them to pronounce a Sentence of *Excommunication* upon a certain incestuous Man amongst them, who had married his Fathers Wife; had since received an account of a very good effect that this infliction had wrought upon the offending Person; so as to bring him to a great sense both of the Sin he had committed, and of the Scandal which thereby he had given to the Church.

See 1 Cor.
v. 1.

Upon this the *Apostle* in this his *Second*

The Third Sermon.

cond Epistle, commands them to *take off the Censure* under which he lay; and to receive him again into *Communion* with them, *lest being swallow'd up of overmuch sorrow*, he should be driven to *despair*, and so the *Devil* get an *advantage* against them; and that not only in the *ruine* of a single *Brother*, but yet much more by turning that *Discipline* which was designed for the *Edification* of the *Church*, into the *Destruction* of it; *For*, says he, *we are not ignorant of his Devices*.

See the
Rhemists
Annot. on
this Chap.
Catholick
Scriptur.
Point 26.
of Indul-
gences. n.
6.

Were I not resolved against entering on any *Point of Controversie* in this *Place*, I should not here want a very fair *Occasion* to do it. It has been the great *Endeavour* of those of the *Other Communion*, to establish on this procedure of *St. Paul* with this *Corinthian*, their new and dangerous *Doctrine* of *Humane Satisfaction*s to be made for *Sin*, and of the power of the *Church* to grant *Indulgences* for the *Remission* of them. But I desire now to have no other *Enemy* but that of my *Text* to encounter: And the half of whose *Devices* will be more than enough for our present *Consideration*, without exposing the *Artifices* of any *Others*, how busie soever they

they too may be to get an Advantage of us. And therefore it shall suffice to remark with reference to the Subject before us; That all which can reasonably be concluded from St. Paul's process with this *Corinthian*, is no more than what we readily allow of; viz. The Exercise of publick discipline for the correction of Open and Scandalous Offenders; and whom the Church has certainly Power both for their Sins to separate from her Society, as the Apostle did this *Incestuous Man*; and upon a sincere Repentance to release the Censure, and receive them again into Communion, as in this Chapter he ordered them to do this *Penitent Corinthian*.

But now this is neither the Doctrine nor Practice of those who pretend to argue from this place. Their *Satisfactions* and *Indulgences* are of another kind than what *Canonical Penances* and the Relaxation of them will amount to. They suppose that after mens Sins by the Sacrament of Penance are Forgiven to them, so that there is now no more Guilt remaining; nor by consequence any more Obligation to an Eternal Punishment due to it; there continues nevertheless an Obligation to Temporal Punishment,

The Third Sermon.

nishment, to be undergone as a *true* and *Proper satisfaction for Sin*, either *here*, or in *Purgatory*: and that this the *Pope* has power to *dispence* with, by *Applying* to them the *satisfactions* not only of *Christ*, but of all his *Saints*; who having lived severe Lives, and suffered a greater *Temporal Punishment* than was requisite to *satisfie* for their *own Sins*, have left a *Stock in Bank* to the *Treasure* of the *Church*, for the advantage of others; and the *Remission* of these *Temporal Pains*, by such an *Application*, this is that which they properly call an *Indulgence*.

And now then we may beg leave to ask, In what part of this *History* do they find any grounds for all this? Did *St. Paul* in his former *Epistle* command the *Church of Corinth* to impose a *Penance* on this *Incestuous Man* to *satisfie* for his *Sin*? No; But he commanded them to *Excommunicate* him for his *Offence*, to cut him off from the body of the *Faithful*, to whom he had given so great a *scandal* by his *uncleanness*.

Or here in this *Chapter*, does he send him any kind *Bull* with a *plenary Indulgence* for what he had done, to set him free of what *Temporal Pain* might yet be due

due for his Offence ; and to acquit him of any further trouble now, and of the danger of *Purgatory* hereafter? Not so neither : But he orders the *Governors* of the *Church* to take off the *Censure* under which he lay ; and to receive him again into *Communion* with them ; and to confirm their Love towards him ; Lest he should be swallow'd up of over much Grief, and so Satan get an advantage against Him.

In short, That there is here a plain account of the *Exercise* of *Publick Discipline* both in the *Excommunicating* of this *Incestuous Corinthian*, and in the *Receiving* of him again into *Communion*, this we readily confess. But for the new-inventions of *Humane Satisfaction*s to be made for *Sin*, and of the Power of the *Pope* to apply one Man's *Merits* to the *Forgiveness* of another Man's *Offences* ; and all this after such a manner, and upon such terms as is now Practised in the *Church* of *Rome*, of all this there is not one word either in this, or any other passage of *Holy Scripture*, but much to the contrary, as might easily be made appear, were I minded to enter on such a Debate.

But it shall suffice me to have remarked

The Third Sermon.

ked thus much, for the clearing of the present place from these Abuses. As for those *Devices* which I am now to consider; *viz.* By what means and motives it is that the *Devil* after all our Cautions and Engagements to the contrary, nevertheless still continues to draw us into *Sin*; many there are, and I cannot pretend in this Discourse to comprehend more than a very small proportion of them. I will take up those that seem most useful to be remark'd under these two Considerations:

Ist. Of those *Devices* whereby he makes it his business to *hinder* us in the *Discharge* of our *Duty*.

Ildly. Of those *Devices* whereby he leads us into the *Commission* of *Sin*.

I begin with the *Former* of these, the Consideration,

Ist. Of those *Devices* whereby the *Devil* is wont to *hinder* us in the *discharge* of our *Duty*.

And here, I shall not insist on those common and obvious *Methods* which every one knows, tho' few are so careful as they ought to be to prevent them;
such

such as *carelesness* and *indifference* in the concern of our *Salvation*; *The Love of this World*; and of the *Honours*, and *Pleasures*, and *Interests* of it: and which upon this account, *St. Paul* calls *the root of all evil*: 1 *Tim.* vi. 10. And *St. James* plainly tells us is *Enmity with God*. *James* iv .4. The *Devices* I shall now consider, are such as have more of *Subtilty* and *Contrivance* in them; and which by a shew of somewhat that seems to be *Good*, seduce men many times into a *neglect* of that *Duty*, which alone really and truly is so. Now four things especially there are by which the *Devil* is wont to discourage, and hinder weaker *Minds* in the discharge of their *Duty*: viz,

- 1st, By throwing *Prejudices* in their way against it.
- 2^{dly}, By instilling into their *Minds* *False Principles*, whereby to corrupt the *Practise* of it.
- 3^{dly}, By filling them with *Doubts* and *Scruples* to discourage them in their *Piety*.
- 4^{thly}, By engaging their *Zeal* in vain and fruitless *Strifes* and *Disputes* about *Religion*, which ought

The Third Sermon.

to be employed on the *Practice* of it.

1st. It is none of the least of the *De-vices* of the *Devil*, to hinder mens *Piety*, by throwing of false *Pre-judices* in their way against the *Practice* of it.

I need not say what a frightful thing many look upon a *Christian* course of *Life* to be, and how *difficult*, and sometimes even *impossible* they think it, to fulfil that *Duty* which *God* requires of us.

They regard him as a hard and severe *Task-Master* that lays intollerable *Burdens* upon his *Servants*, and has prepared *Eternal Punishments* for the least default under them. All their thoughts are taken up with those *Strict Commands* of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, of *taking up the Cross*, of *forgiving and loving Enemies*; of despising any losses, shame or other difficulties they may at any time be exposed to for the *Sake of Christ* and the *Preservation of a Good Conscience*. Thus they look upon *Christianity* to be a Religion made up of nothing but *Melancholy Fears*, and *amazing Dangers*; that allows of no *Pleasure*, suffers not the least *Appetite* to be gratified;

fied; but denies even the most Innocent and Reasonable Enjoyments; nor promises any Happiness in another World, but upon the severe Condition of being Despised and Miserable in this.

And now when such are Mens Apprehensions of *Christianity*, what wonder if we see so few care to enter on the Practice of it? But Blessed be God, who has not thus dealt with us. *Straight indeed is the gate, and narrow the way* Mat. vii. 14. that leads to Heaven, but by the Grace of God it is not Impassable. From the very first entering, it dilates its self, and in a little while becomes no less pleasant, but much more secure, than that *High Road* which so many prefer before it.

To be plain, I dare affirm, That a State of Religion is so far from being that sour disagreeable State men commonly apprehend it to be; that on the contrary 'tis the only State that is attended with a real Pleasure and Satisfaction. *Godliness* is its own reward, even in the present practice of it: *It has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 8. And whosoever will but seriously apply himself to the discharge of it, will soon be convinced upon how good Grounds

PROV. iii.
17.

the wise man once pronounced concerning it; That *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.*

As for that frightful *Idea* which so many entertain of *Religion*, it is wholly founded on their own mistakes of the true *Nature* and *Design* of it. For,

1st. It is utterly false that *Christianity* denies us any of those Enjoyments, which a Wise man would even desire to Indulge. It allows whatever is truly fitting for us, and restrains only those brutish excesses, which even *Natural Reason* and the Principles of *Common Morality* forbid us to pursue.

Nor 2^{dly}, Do men any more truly represent God, than they do his Religion. They look upon him as one who requires great things of us; but they forget that he who requires these things, does also Promise that if we are not wanting in our own Endeavours, he will give us *Grace*, and *Strength*, and *Ability* to fulfil them. They consider him as a most severe, and *Just Judge*: But they do not consider, that his *Mercy* is as Infinite as his *Justice*; and that he is as ready to make allowances for our *Infirmities*, and Pardon those *Sins* we unwillingly Commit, as to Punish those Offences which
our

our *Malice* and our *Negligence* expose us to. That for this He has *sent his own Son into the World*, to be Himself *the propitiation for our Sins*; and to open the way to Heaven by a *Gospel of Repentance*, seeing we could not attain to it by any way of a *Perfect and unfinning Obedience*. So that now then, let a Christian be but upright and sincere, let him but *love God*, and delight in his Service, and strive and labour as far as he is able to fulfil it; If he *Sins*, let him Repent of it, *let him confess his Wickedness, and be sorry for his Sins*, and humbly Implore God's Mercy to forgive him; and then how Weak and Impotent soever he be, He shall certainly find not only Pardon, but acceptance too with his Blessed Saviour for ever.

And then, *3dly*, For what concerns those severe *Duties of Christianity*, and upon which the strongest prejudices are commonly raised against it: Besides that they are things infinitely excellent in themselves, and by a divine assistance far from being burdensome to us; nay, when put in the balance with the reward of *Eternal Glory*, not worthy to be compared with it; 'tis Evident that these *Duties* are not required either of all *Christians*,

Mat. xvi.

24.

or at all times. How few are there, for instance, now a days, that have any occasion to put in practice that severest precept of all which our Religion Requires of us ; viz, *To deny our selves, and take up our Cross, and follow Christ* ? These are the Tryals only of some *singular Persons*, and at some *certain Seasons*. And whenever God sees fit to call any good men to them, He never fails upon their earnest *Prayers* to Him, to furnish them with *Strength* and *Grace* proportionable to bear them.

So that upon the whole, it appears, that all these *Prejudices* are only the *Devices* of the *Devil* to discourage Men from their *Duty* ; and by the false apprehension of I know not what imaginary difficulties in the *Practice* of *Religion* now, to precipitate them into *Real* and *Eternal* Miseries hereafter. But

2dly. A *Second* way whereby He hinders men's progress in *Piety* is, by instilling such *Principles* into them, as are apt to corrupt the practice of it.

And here had I the time to insist upon them, I would not doubt to rank in the very first front, those *Atheistical* conclusions which the brisk Disputers of our Age so much abound with ; Who not
con-

content with the *Psalmist's Fool*, to say Psal. xiv. 1.
in their heart, there is no God, dare openly dispute against his *Being*, and with their mouths deny that God whom yet in their hearts they acknowledged, nay whom their *fears* and *terrors* into which every the least accident throws them, even testify to the world, that for all their *Gallantry* they cannot disbelieve.

Or, because this is the presumption only of a few desperate men, I would beg leave rather to argue a little with some of our more refined *Sceptics*; the great Assertors of *Human Reason*, in opposition to the *Sacred Authority* of *Divine Revelation*. Who allowing of a God, nevertheless *strengthen themselves in wickedness*, by their ungrounded Notions of his *Goodness* and *Justice*: Whilst they conclude it to be inconsistent with either of those *Attributes*, for him to punish a temporal and transient sin, with *everlasting Torments*; tho committed against an Infinite God, and against the plain terms of a Covenant of *Eternal Happiness* if we do well, and of *Everlasting Punishment* if we do ill, entred into by us at our *Baptism*, and at *Confirmation* made our own act, by our own express consent to it.

Or,

The Third Sermon.

Or, lastly, because such too there are amongst us, I would reason with those who argue against the malignity even of *Sin* its self, and would by their disputes turn the greatest *Vices* into *innocent* and *indifferent Actions*: Whilst from the strong inclinations which they find in themselves to *evil*, they conclude, that certainly it ought not to be esteemed so very great a fault to pursue the dictates of that *Nature* which *God* himself has implanted in us: And that doubtless our *Passions* were never designed to be merely a snare and a torment to us, as yet they conclude they must be, unless we will allow it to be lawful for them as freely to indulge them, as they unreasonably contend they ought to do.

But all these, and a few others of the like kind, how destructive soever they may be of true Piety, are the *Principles* of Men not yet beginning to be religious; and by consequence, such as I ought to suppose are needless to be obviated in this Assembly. Those I would now remark, are of another nature, *Principles* upon which even good Christians do sometimes flatter themselves in Wickedness, or at least neglect to live up to that exactness of Christian Practice, as they ought to do.

Now

The Third Sermon.

91

Now such I esteem first of all, that popular mistake by which many persons too easily delude themselves, of a *good mind*; a *desire* and an *intention* to live well, and which they hope shall atone for all their miscarriages, which notwithstanding their good intention, they still continue to commit. This is a *Principle* which I fear deceives very many in the world. They cannot deny but that they are indeed very great sinners; but yet they are sorry for it, and they desire to live better. But alas! What shall they do? They are weak and impotent as others are; exposed to a thousand Temptations every day, and who is there that either does or can withstand them all?

And indeed, where the *Intention* is so good, as to make men careful and diligent in their duty; if they sin only by surprize or incogitancy, and when they do so, *repent* them truly, and watch themselves more diligently for the time to come; I will not deny, but that here their *good Intention* may find acceptance with God Almighty. But otherwise, to think that a weak desire, and a vain resolution, and a transient sorrow, the usual Piety of those who rely upon this excuse, shall find favour at the Great Day of Accounts:

The Third Sermon.

counts : This is that *Device* which the *Devil*, I fear, deceives many withal, but for which there is not the least ground or colour in the *Holy Scripture*.

2. And from this proceeds another mistake, and that not at all less dangerous than the foregoing; which is, To reckon all those sins which after such a *good intention* they commit, to be *sins of Infirmary*, and which they perswade themselves may be consistent with a *state of Grace* now, and with the hopes of *Glory* hereafter.

Thus if when they commit a sin, their Conscience checks them, and they parly with the Temptation, and strive a little, and then yield, and then they are sorry and make some transient, ineffectual resolutions of doing better for the time to come, but which all vanish at the very next trial; this they call *Infirmary*, and so God knows it is, but such an *Infirmary* as will by no means excuse the sins which they commit upon the account of it.

Sins of Infirmary are of another kind; they are *weak* and *imperfect sins*, when we are either *surprized* into the *Commission* of them, or otherwise hurried on by some *sudden fear*, or other the like power-

powerful *Passion* or overbearing *Temptation*, before we have time to consider what we do, or to arm our selves with firmness and resolution against it. But otherwise, where the sin is known, and the Will free, and there was time for deliberation, and yet we agreed to it, this can by no means be called a *sin* of *Infirmity*: And here the frequency of the Commission, or the easiness of falling, may serve to aggravate indeed, but sure will by no means *extenuate*, and much less *excuse* the guilt of it.

I might to these add, 3^{dly}, those Principles of the *Church* of *Rome*, which I am persuaded, have not a little contributed to mens neglect of true Piety, viz. of being *saved* by others Performances; of *Purgatory* and *Indulgences*, *Masses* and *Prayers* for the *Dead*; of the power of the *Priest* to *absolve sins*; and of an imperfect, ineffectual sorrow for sin, sufficient to dispose a man to receive the *Grace* of *Absolution*; of the efficacy of the *Sacraments* to obtain their ends, tho the person be not otherwise in a condition to obtain the *Grace* of *God* without them; and in which some of them have gone so far, as to declare *Contrition* to be rather a *hindrance* than a *benefit* to the

Sa-

Morin. de
Pœnit. 18.
c.4. n. 26.

Sacrament of Penance; and one adds plainly, That the *excellence of the Sacraments of the Gospel in general, above those of the Law, consists in this, That they have freed us from the intolerable yoke of loving God, and being truly sorry for our sins.*

I need not after this say any thing of the extravagance of their late *private Casuists*, remark'd and censured by many of their own *Communion*, and not long since by the *Pope* himself, yet still continuing, notwithstanding both, to be but too much applauded by very great numbers amongst them. But these being *Principles* against which I hope I need not prepare any one of our *Communion*; I will instead of all these, mention only one *Principle* more, 4thly, By which men often hinder their progress in Piety, and that is a *Principle of Compliment and Good Breeding*. When they neglect their duty, it may be do that which they know to be contrary to it, but yet rather than be thought *rude* and *precise*, rather than they will disturb Company, or be markt out as singular, they will do as others do, and so disobey God, for fear of disobliging men.

That this is a Case which very often

oc-

occurs in the method of our present Conversation in the World, is not to be denied. Now then consider, I beseech you, what the Contest here is, and what the issue most certainly will be. *God* and *Man* are the Parties concerned, and the question is, Whether your *Duty* towards him, or your *Civility* towards the other, ought to preponderate? Whether you should go to Heaven with a few, singular, out-of-fashion Christians, or for company sake take the broad road, tho you know that it leads to Eternal Damnation? And now when the choice is so plain, methinks it should be no hard matter to persuade men to despise such a *Principle* as this. To convince them that their *Salvation* is a concern of too great importance to be submitted to these formalities, and that 'tis to push the Compliment a great deal too far, to be *damned* rather than be thought *ill bred*. But

3dly. A Third Device whereby the *Devil* oftentimes endeavours to hinder mens progress in *Religion*, is, by filling their minds with *groundless fears* and *scruples* as to their *Eternal Salvation*.

It is a matter of sad Consideration to think

The Third Sermon.

think what discouragements many Christians labour under, in the discharge of their duty ; who either wanting a Capacity to receive a satisfaction, or indulging a close and melancholly disposition so long, till they are at last incapable of any, live in doubts and fears, and perplexities of mind, and it may be by degrees, wholly cast off all thoughts of Religion, since they cannot find any peace or satisfaction in it.

Now tho such troubles as these may much more easily be prevented before they arrive , than removed after ; yet there are ways to encounter even this *Device* too of our Enemy, and to render it of no force to hinder our Piety. To which end,

1st. If any *fears* or *scruples* of this kind arise in your minds, examine your selves, and see whether there be any real grounds or foundation for them. Whether your lives have been such as may give you just cause to apprehend your selves in danger of *losing your souls* ? If there be nothing of this kind which you can discover to support such fears, then consider with your selves, that the tenor of God's *Threats* and *Promises* is very plain

plain, and easie to be understood. That he will never condemn any man in another world, but for living in a disobedience to his Commands in This. That our duty is clear and exprefs; and that Conscience, when sincerely examined, will not fail to tell us whether we do truly fulfil it or no. And therefore that, as *St. John* says, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* But should the case be otherwise; should you find your selves in never so dangerous a course of sin, yet still 'tis in your power, by God's Assistance, to deliver your selves out of it. And then, *There is mercy with God, that he may be feared.* So that be your state at the present never so dangerous, yet if you will even now lay hold upon his Mercy, if ye will yet *repent and return unto the Lord your God, and confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and the blood of Christ shall cleanse you from all unrighteousness.*

1 Jo.iii.21.

Psa.130.4.

1 Joh 19.

But now 2dly, If your Case be *dubious*, and neither these nor any other reflections are able to give you that satisfaction you desire, yet should not this move you to give way to the *Tempter*; but rather

H

ther

The Third Sermon.

ther should engage you to set your selves the more diligently to this work ; to call in some *Spiritual Guide* to your assistance; and if upon a sincere opening of your state to him, neither can he find out any grounds for your *fears* and *scruples*, your *doubts* and your *apprehensions* ; you ought then to labour by all means to *possess your Souls in Peace* ; and to conclude, That these Terrors are only the *Devices* of the *Devil* to discourage you in your duty, not any real causes for *doubt* or *despair*.

And yet 3^{dly}, Tho neither by these nor any other means you should ever be able totally to overcome these difficulties ; yet ought not this to make you ever the less careful of going on still in a serious discharge of your duty. Nay, on the contrary, it ought to make you the more *zealous* and *diligent* in the performance of it. A man that lives here all his life in such perplexities, if yet he fulfils that obedience, and practices that repentance which God requires, may nevertheless be saved at the last. But he that upon any of these grounds neglects this, tho he goes on never so securely and comfortably in his evil

evil way, shall certainly fall into ruin and destruction in the end. And since such *fears* as these, arise from an apprehension that we do not live so well, nor serve God so sincerely as we ought to do; the best means, when all is done, to remove them is, if it be possible, to outlive even our own apprehensions, and to *serve* God so *truly* and *heartily*, as not to be able to doubt, but that we shall find a reward for it at his hands.

I shall add but one thing more in this *Case*, (4thly,) and it is this. Be not discouraged, nor think your *Faith* imperfect, or your *Religion* vain, because you find yourselves still attended with some *fears* and *anxieties* about your *future state*. St. Paul not only allows this, but exhorts us, with his *Philipians*, Phil. ii. 12.
To work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. To be without all concern in a matter of such moment, were to be stupid and insensible, rather than religious. And when we come to appear before *Christ* in *Judgment*, we shall be sentenced, not according to our own *Opinions* or *Apprehensions* of our selves, whether good

The Third Sermon.

or evil, but according to the *Sincerity* of our *Lives*, to the *Extent* of our *Charity*, and to the *Truth* of our *Repentance*. And all these supported and made perfect by the *Merits* and *Satisfaction* of a most Gracious and Merciful *Redeemer*, who will pity and pardon beyond what we are able to express or to conceive. But,

4thly, And to conclude this *Point*, The last *Device* by which the *Devil*, in these days especially, has endeavoured to hinder our *Piety*, is, by turning that *Zeal* into *Strifes* and *Disputes* about Religion, which ought to have been employed on the *Practice* of it.

For indeed, were we now to enquire what the great demonstration of all our *Zeal* is, both in the *Priests* and the *People*, what other account should we be able to bring back than this, That they are all hot and furious for their several *particular Opinions*; as if the whole *Gospel* of *Christ*, and all the *Hopes* of *Eternity*, depended on them; but for the *Practice* of a *Gospel-life*, for that *Devotion*, that *Charity*, that *Humility*, and *Integrity* which were once the great *Care* and *Ornament* of the *Christian Church*,

The Third Sermon.

101

Church, these, God knows, are but little regarded by the most of us.

If, 1st. We consider the *Publick Effects* of these *Controversies* to a decay of *Piety*: What a desolation shall we find too often occasion'd by them? I need not tell you how many *Countries* have been ruined; what *Kings* and *Princes* have been *murthered*, and *banished*, and *deposed* by their own people; what *Blood* has been *spilt*; what numbers of *honest* and *innocent* people, *men*, *women*, and *children*, have been lost and undone by them. And by a strange *Metamorphosis*, Cruelty and Oppression, Falseness and Dissimulation, Deceit and Perjury, all the vilest and most scandalous sins, by the Sacred Power of the *Churches Interest*, consecrated into *Christian* and *Heroical Virtues*. And to compleat the astonishment, the Holy *Martyrs* and *Confessors* have been damned to Hell, whilst their *Persecutors* have been *Sainted*, and placed in *Heaven*.

If 2^{dly}, We look upon these *Disputes* in themselves only, without regarding any such *desperate effects* of them: I wish I had no occasion to say how prejudicial they have even thus been, and

The Third Sermon.

without God's Infinite Mercy, might have been much more to our *common Christianity*: Whilst by the means of these, not only *Schisms* and *Heresies* (and even those too, St. Paul reckons among the *works of the flesh*, Gal. v. 20. which whoso are guilty of, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*) have crept into the *Church*; but, Some from these *Contentests* have concluded all our Religion to be uncertain; and esteem'd it the wisest way not to join with any of us, till we can somewhat better agree to which of us they ought to go. Others, considering the manner how these *Controversies* have, of late especially, been managed and carried on, have with some colour of reason, been tempted to *believe* all our Pretences to be only *Deceit* and *Vision*; for that surely did those who stand up in the defence of Religion, believe it themselves, they would never defend their *Faith* in such a manner, as utterly *contradicts* all the *Morality* of it.

Which of the great *Articles* of *Christianity* have not our modern *disputes* call'd in question? It is but a very little while since the *Mystery* of the *Sacred Trinity*, and the *Glorious Incarnation* of the *Son of God*, have again been struck at, by those
who

who plainly shew they care not what becomes of *Christianity*, if they cannot make their *Popish Heresie* prevail with it. And that if not in so plain and direct a manner as the *Arians* and *Socinians* of our days do ; yet in another no less repugnant to the belief of them. For if the *contradictions*, as they say, be indeed as great in these, as 'tis plain they are in that other *Mystery*, or rather as one of their own great *defenders* of it truly called it, That *MONSTER* of *Transubstantiation*, to which they are compared; I doubt all considering persons will resolve from the *self-evident falseness* of the *one*, to conclude against the others ; rather than from their belief of *those*, to give up their assent to *this*.

Card
Perron.

If we look to the *Morality* of the *Gospel* ; let the Heat and the Passion, the Bitterness, and the Evil-speaking ; shall I add, and even the fraud and dissimulation which have appear'd in these debates, be a sad evidence how destructive such disputes are of true *Piety* and *Religion*. Whilst to lessen an Adversary, or to be thought to get the better in an Argument, men value not how or what they write ; but seem resolved at any rate to maintain their point, tho' for the doing

of it they are forced to such shifts, as without God's Infinite Mercy, must lose them their own Souls.

What shall I say to that *Epidemical Uncharitableness* that is from hence diffused into the several *Parties* of *Christians*? Whil'st every one seems to reckon his Enemy no better then a *Heathen* and a *Publican*; and having by their uncharitable censures cut him off from the hopes of *God's Mercy hereafter*, think themselves afterwards disengaged from all obligations even of *common humanity* towards him now.

I speak not this, as if I meant to accuse those of our *Church* who have so generously stood in the Gap, and sacrificed their *Peace*, their *Quiet*, and their *Interests* to the defence of an excellent Cause, and a truly *Orthodox*, *Catholic*, and *Apostolic Church*: And much less would I be thought hereby to discourage you from being as *zealous for the Faith*, and as *constant* in its defence, as both your duty requires, and as, I bless God, you all of you are this day, and I hope, and am persuaded, will ever be so. But I speak this to deplore the sad state of *Christianity*, and to bewail those divisions, than which nothing has been more destructive
to

to the *practice* of Religion. I speak it, earnestly to beseech and exhort you, even by the *Bowels* and *Mercy* of *Christ Jesus*, that you will be careful to add to your *Faith Works* : To adorn your holy Profession, by a suitable Conversation : To live to the Honour of your *Church*, as well as to dispute for it : And seeing ye know what danger these *Controversies* are apt to bring to the *decay of Piety*, that you would be careful to prevent them, and not suffer your *Zeal* for your *Faith*, ever to carry you to any unchristian or unwarrantable measures in the defence of it.

And thus have I set before you some of those *devices* whereby the *Devil* is wont to *hinder* our *Piety*; I have but just time to mention a very few of the other kind, *viz.*

Idly, Those by which he is wont to draw us into the *commission of Sin*.

It has been an ancient Remark, and the reason whereof is so deeply rooted in our very Natures, as may justly make it a *first principle* in this *Enquiry*; That *Evil, as such, is not desirable*. No Man ever commits a *sin* for *sinning sake*, but upon the account of some good or other which

which he either really does, or at least thinks shall accrue to him thereby.

Now 'tis upon this, the Devil founds all his *devices* to deceive us. He observes our *Interests*, our *Tempers*, and *Inclinations*; what it is that either our *Condition*, or *Circumstances*, or *Designs* in the World render us the most apt to be caught with, and accordingly offers his *Temptations* to us in such a manner as may be most like to prevail with us.

So that then to arm our selves against those *Artifices* by which he is wont to draw us into Sin, we shall need no long search, no laborious enquiry into his particular *Temptations*. Only let us turn our eyes into our own Souls; there let us consider what sins they are we are the most apt to fall into, what passions the most command us, to what irregularities our *Tempers*, or our *Circumstances* lay us the most open, and this will presently both shew us our danger, and how we ought to fortify our selves against it.

But tho' to enter therefore upon all the particular *Devices* of *Satan* whereby he leads Men into *sin*, be a work as needless as it would be infinite; yet some general remarks there are, which we may do

do well to make in order to our security.

And 1st. It is commonly the first step which the *Devil* takes towards the leading Men into *sin*, to perswade them to a Carelessness and Indifference in their *duty*. Whil'st Men are warm and vigorous in the practice of Piety, zealous of God's Honour, and sincere in the pursuance of what makes for it; 'tis plain the Enemy can get but very little *advantage of us*. But if instead of this, we live only in a *form of Godliness*, and regard not the *power of it*: If we are negligent and unconcern'd for Religion, and take but little notice of what it requires of us; We are then ready for the *Tempter* to make his Assault upon us: And 'twill be no hard matter to deceive that Man into the *commission of sin*, who is already but very little affected with the sense of his duty, nor takes any great care for the fulfilling of it.

2^{dly}, Another *device* whereby the *Devil* often gets an *advantage of us*, not only to hinder our Piety, but even to lead us into the greatest violations of it, is by the *Customs and Opinion of the World*. I have before observed what Slaves we are, the very best of us, to these things.
They

The Third Sermon.

They corrupt our *Practice*, and *debauch* our very *Reason* and *Understanding*. And we may at this day find many things in the practice of mankind, become the praise and accomplishment of a *Gentleman*, which, were we to examine them by the Rules of the Gospel, would be seen to have no part in the *Character* of a *Christian*. And then I need not say how fatally dangerous that must be to lead us into *sin*, which is able so far to deceive our very *Consciences*, as not to be thought to carry any *guilt* or *shame* in the *commission* of it.

And these are such *Devices* whereby the *Devil* oftentimes draws men into *Sin*; I will add only two more, whereby, when once men are engaged in a *course* of *sin*, he is wont to strengthen and confirm them in it: *viz.* 1st. An unreasonable *Hope* of *God's Mercy*; And 2^{dly}. A vain dependance on their own *future Repentance*: That is to say, They sin on now, in prospect of amendment hereafter; and then they make no doubt but that they shall find favour and mercy with God, as well as other sinners in the like circumstances have done before them.

But,

But, O God! what a desperate reliance is this, whereon to venture all the *Hopes* and *Glories* of *Eternity*! For tell me, O Sinner! whoever thou art that thus projectest a future Amendment, after thou hast taken thy fill of Pleasure, and art no longer able to pursue thy *Sins* and thy *Debaucheries*: What security hast thou, that That God whom thou so despisest shall continue thy life to thee, and give thee any such Time and Opportunity to repent? Canst thou command the *Sun* that it should stand still, and put a stop to thy days, that thou may'st the more freely follow thy Revels and thy Delights? Or canst thou hope, when thou lyest down on thy last Bed, with *Hezekiah*, to add a new Series of Years to thy expiring breath, by then lifting up thy profane Heart, and thy deceitful Voice, to That God whom thou hast so long continued to offend?

Nay, but couldst thou do this, and so arrive to the time thou hast assign'd for this Work; Art thou sure thou shalt then be in a *Capacity* of fulfilling it? There is a time when there shall be no more any opportunity for *Repentance*, tho' we should have otherwise leisure enough for the accomplishing of it. And sure, if any
such

The Third Sermon.

such is, the most likely to be that *Season*, which *Wicked Men* have lay'd out for their return to their duty, in order to their going on for the present in their evil doings. Nor is there any reason why that man should expect *Grace* to repent at the last, who all his life long has neglected and despised the *Offers* of it.

I will not now say how unfit a time that of *Old Age* and *Sickness* is for so great an undertaking : When the *Soul* as well as *Body* is feeble and impotent ; when the *Memory* is decay'd, the *Reason* fails, and our *Affections* are dull, our *Zeal* is cold, and all our thoughts taken up with the horrors of *Hell*, and the sense of those *Infirmities* under which the *Body* labours. But sure I am, all these things ought to convince men of the desperate folly, and even madness of such a *procrastination* ; and to engage them, whil'st they have yet the time, to lay hold upon that *Mercy*, which it may be they shall hereafter neither have *Grace* nor *Opportunity* to implore.

See this
more at
large
Serm. VI,
VII.

But I must not pursue these things any further ; nor shall I make any *Application* of what I have already offer'd : but, without more enlargement, will conclude all with the words of the *Church*.

O God,

The Third Sermon.

III

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our Nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.

Collect for
the ivth
Sund. after
Epiph.

Grand old man of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

of the 11th

OF
Stedfastness in Religion.
A
S E R M O N
Preached before the
PRINCE and PRINCESS
OF
D E N M A R K.
August 5th 1688.

2 P E T. III. 17, 18.

*Ye therefore, Beloved, seeing ye know
these things before, beware lest ye also
being led away with the error of the
wicked, fall from your own stedfast-
ness.*

*But grow in Grace, and in the know-
ledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus
Christ: To him be Glory both now and
for ever. Amen.*

THese words are not only the *C*lose
of this *E*pistle, but also the *A*ppli-
cation of all that the *A*pistle before had
written in it. And for the understanding
I of

Jude iii.

of them, we must observe, That the design of *St. Peter* in this Address to the Christians dispersed abroad among the *Jews*, and now under great temptations either to corrupt or to abandon that *Faith* that had *once* been *delivered* to them, was to exhort and stir them up to a constant continuance in their Profession, and not to suffer themselves, whether by the cunning Artifice of Some, or by the open Violence of Others, to be either totally frightened out of their *Religion*, or to be misled into any *false Doctrines*, contrary to the Truth and Purity which they had been taught.

V. 1.

v. 2.

In the beginning of the *second Chapter*, he speaks of certain *false Teachers* that were crept in amongst them, and made it their great endeavour by any means to bring in *damnable Heresies*. And he foresaw that their wicked Industry would be likely to prove but too fatally successful; for, *Many* (says he) *shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of Truth shall be evil spoken of.*

And in the next *Chapter*, he goes on to foretel the near approach of those *Judgments* which our Saviour Christ had
so

The Fourth Sermon.

115

so often denounced against the *Jews*, and in which those *complying Christians* were in like manner to be involved. And by both these Considerations, he finally, in the *Close* of all, stirs them up, both to a *Care* of themselves, and to a *Constancy* in their Profession ;

Ye therefore, Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

But grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : to Him be Glory both now and for ever, Amen.

Such was the occasion of these words; and the prosecution of them at this time will engage Me to explain the nature, and to exhort you to the practice of two *Duties*, than which I know none more proper for our serious Consideration ; *Growth in Grace, and Stedfastness in Religion* ; and from both which there are but too many *Seducers* on every hand to turn us aside. I shall pursue both in this following Order.

I 2

I. I will

The Fourth Sermon.

- I. I will shew you, what the true nature of that *stedfastness* in *Religion* is, to which our *Text* here exhorts us.
- II. By what *Motives* especially it was, that the *Apostle* stirr'd up the *Christians* to whom he wrote, and that I would now crave leave to exhort you, to such a *stedfastness*.
- III. How highly both necessary in its self it is, but especially how advantageous to this great End, that we should all of us endeavour what in us lies, to grow in *Grace*, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.

And first,

- I. What the true nature of that *stedfastness* in *Religion* is, to which our *Text* exhorts us, and which I am from thence to recommend to you.

For 'tis not every *firmness* that deserves the name of a true and rational *stedfastness*: and a man may as well exceed, by a perverse, unwarrantable resolution not to hearken to any *Motives*, tho' never so reasonable, to change his Opinion ;

on ; as by an unfix'd and irresolute temper abandon himself to *every wind of Doctrine* that shall come to turn him aside from it.

Constancy in Religion is a Vertue that, like all others, must be regulated by *Prudence*. It must be firm, but it must be well-grounded too. And he who would go about at all adventures to recommend a *perseverance* in that *Faith*, whatever it be, in which a man has been *born* and *bred*, without allowing a just enquiry to be made into the Grounds of it, and even a liberty to forsake it too, should they prove less solid than they ought to be ; He may indeed provide for their security who chance to be already in the right way, but shall render it utterly impossible for those that are not, ever to come to the knowledge of it.

It is not therefore such a *blind steadfastness* as this, a *constancy* in our *Religion* whether it be good or bad, that either the *Apostle* here means, or that I would now recommend to you. This would be to make a plea for *Obstinacy* rather than *Constancy* ; whilst by such a Rule it would be the duty of a *Jew* to remain a *Jew*, a *Heathen* a *Heathen* ; for a *Papist* or *Socinian* to continue all their lives *Papist*

pist or *Socinian*, no less than for One of the *Church of England* to be firm and stedfast to the Faith and Communion of it. That which I understand by a true *stedfastness*, is this: When a man is upon rational and good Grounds evidently perswaded of the *Truth* and *Purity* of his *Religion*, then to resolve to stick close to it, and not suffer any base, unworthy *Motives*, to draw him aside from it. Our *Religion* must first be *well grounded*, and then it will be true *stedfastness* to adhere to it. And therefore to give such necessary directions as may suffice for the practice of this *Duty*, I must distinctly consider it in both its respects, and as it stands in the *Middle* between the two *Extremes* of a *blind Obstinacy* on the *one hand*, and of a *weak Instability* on the *other*; and by either of which, the true nature of it will become equally destroy'd.

First then: He that will be truly *stedfast* in his *Religion*, must take heed that he does not mistake *Obstinacy* for *Stedfastness*.

This is an *Error* so much the rather to be remarked on this occasion, in that a daily experience sadly shows

shows us at once, both the danger and easiness of such a mistake. It is a strange perverseness in some men, that they make it no less than a *mortal sin* to have any *doubts*, though never so reasonable, of any the least *Doctrine* they have once been taught to profess. And there is hardly an Immorality so heinous and provoking, so contrary to the *Honour* of God, and so destructive of Salvation, which their *Spiritual Guides* will not sooner overpass, than such a Scruple. Inasmuch, that by the express *Order* of the *Church* which I am now speaking of, 'tis made a part of mens solemn reception into their *Communion*, the very condition of being admitted into a state of Profelytism with them, not only to *abjure* for the present, all those Tenets which they are pleased to call *Hetical*, but also to imprecate upon their heads all the *miseries* of *Eternal Torments*, if ever they suffer themselves
BY ANY OCCASION OR ARGUMENTS WHATSOEVER,
 to be hereafter better instructed.

See the R.
Pontific.
Ord. ad
Reconcil.]
Hæret.
Spondeo
sub Ana-
thematis
Obligati-
one. M:
nunquam
Quorum-
libet su-
asionibus
vel quo-
cunque a-

l'o modo ad—Reversurum. Et si (quod absit) ab hac me unitate aliquâ Occasione vel Argumento diviserò, perjurii Reatum incurrens, æternæ obligatus poenæ inveniar. &c.

The Fourth Sermon.

This is, in good truth, to make a *Faction of Religion*; 'tis a *Combination* rather than a *Constancy*: And what wretched effects it has upon the minds of those unfortunate, deluded men, that have once suffered themselves to be thus engaged, appears in this; That no rational Motives, no Arguments, though never so clear, are almost able to work upon them. The sad *Vow* they have made, recurs continually upon their minds: They have *sworn* to continue where they are gone, at all adventures; and therefore they now as obstinately resolve never to return to the Truth, as they once weakly suffered themselves to be seduced from it.

To avoid such an unhappy *Obstinacy* as this, and be *constant* in our *Religion* upon such rational Grounds as may justify us before *God* and *Man*, from the charge of a *pertinacious firmness*, we may please to observe these following directions.

1st. Let our *Religion* be founded in *Knowledg*; i. e. Let us be clearly and evidently convinced of the *Truth* of that to which we do adhere, and then

The Fourth Sermon.

121

we may be sure we cannot be justly charged with *Obstinacy* for our adhering to it.

He who takes up his *Religion* upon trust, that receives all the *Articles* of his *Creed* by wholesale; *believes* as his *Church believes*, but it may be knows not either what that is, or wherefore he does so; 'tis evident that such a credulous Disciple as this, may be *blindly obstinate*, but he cannot be wisely *stedfast* in the Faith. A good Christian must be able to give some more reasonable account of his Faith than this, if ever he means to be securely firm in the Profession of it. His *Creed* must be founded on some better *Authority* than a bare *Credulity*. And 'twill be a very useless Plea at the last day, that a man *believed* as his *Church believed*, when he might have had the opportunity of a better information, should he chance by so doing, to live and dye in a *damnable Heresie*; unless he can render some tolerable account either wherefore his *Church believed* so, or at least, wherefore it was that he submitted himself so servilely to her *Authority*.

But

The Fourth Sermon.

But he that *believes* with *knowledg*, because he is clearly and evidently perswaded that it is the *Truth*, need never fear either the danger or imputation of such an *Obstinacy*, for his firmness in adhering to his Faith. If, for instance, a Member of the *Church of England* reads in his *Bible* those express words of the *Second Commandment*, *Thou shalt not make to thy self any graven Image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, &c. Thou shalt not Bow down to it, nor Worship it*; If he looks forward to the *History* of the *New Testament*, and there in the *Institution* of the *Blessed Eucharist* sees those words, *Drink ye A L L of this*, in as plain and legible Characters, as those others, *Take and Eat*; and thereupon resolves never to be prevailed upon, either to *Bow down himself before an Image*, or to give up his Right to the *Cup* as well as to the *Bread* in that *Holy Sacrament*, whatever glosses may be made, or pretences be used to induce him to either; 'Tis evident that such a *Firmness* as this, cannot be called *Obstinacy*, unless these *Scriptures* be no longer the *Word of God*, or that no longer a Principle of

The Fourth Sermon.

121

of Scripture, that *in matters of plain* Acts iv.
and undoubted Command, we are to obey 19.
God rather than man.

And in these and the like instances, where the matter is clear even to demonstration, there is no doubt to be made, but that such *Knowledg* will certainly secure us against the charge and danger of *Obstinacy*. But because all points in debate are not thus *Evident*, but on the contrary many are not a little obscure; therefore for the securing our selves from danger in our adherence to these too, we must to our *Knowledg* add,

2dly, A sincere *zeal* to discover the *truth*, with an affectionate *Charity* to those that differ from us.

In such Cases as this, tho' we must *believe* and *profess* according to what appears to us at present to be the *Truth*; yet since the Evidence is not such as to exclude all possibility of our being mistaken, our adherence to it must be qualified with this reserve, neither *rashly* to *censure* those who are *otherwise minded*, nor *obstinately* to *resolve* never to *change* our *Opinion*, if we should perhaps be hereafter convinced that we ought to do so.

Now

Now in order hereunto, it is not necessary that a Man should either *fluctuate* in his *present Faith*, or not be firmly persuaded that he shall never see any reason to forsake it. It is sufficient to take off the imputation of *obstinacy*, that our *stedfastness* be such as not to exclude either a readiness of being better informed, if that be possible; or of making, upon all occasions, a strict and impartial *enquiry* into the *Grounds* and *Reason* of our Faith; or even of hearing freely whatever *objections* can fairly be brought against it. And all this with a sincere desire, and stedfast resolution to discover and embrace the *Truth*, wheresoever it lies; Whether it be that which we now suppose to be so, or whether it shall be found to be on the contrary side. He who is thus disposed in his mind at all times to *receive instruction*, and never presumes rashly to *condemn* any one that is thus in like manner disposed, however otherwise *disagreeing* in *Opinion* from Him; need never fear that his *firmness* is any other than that Wise and Christian *stedfastness* which our *Text* requires, not such an *obstinacy* as both that and we most justly detest and condemn.

But

But here then we must look to the *other extreme*, and take heed, lest for fear of being *perversly constant* to our *Faith*, we fall into a weak and criminal *Instability*. To prevent this, these three things may be consider'd:

- 1st. That we carefully avoid all *Unworthy Motives* of changing our *Religion*.
- 2^{dly}, That we be not too apt to entertain an *ill Opinion* of it.
- 3^{dly}, That if any *Arguments* shall at any time be brought against it that may deserve our considering; we then be sure to give Them that due and diligent *Examination*, that we ought to do.

1st, He that will be *stedfast* in the *Faith*, must above all things take heed to arm himself against all *unworthy Motives* of *changing* his *Religion*.

It is very sad to consider what unchristian means are made use of by some persons to *propagate* their *Religion*: And a Man need almost no other assurance that it cannot be from *God*, than to see the *Professors* of it pursue such *methods* for the promoting of its Interest,

as

The Fourth Sermon.

as most certainly never came down from above.

Thus, if a Man's *fortunes* be *mean*, or his *ambition* *great*; If Religion has not taken so deep root in his Soul as to enable him to overcome the flatteries and temptations of a present *Interest* and *Advantage*; then there shall not be wanting a *seducer* presently to shew him, that he must needs be out of the right way, because it is not that which leads to *preferment*. And 'tis great odds but a good Place, or an Honourable Title, will quickly appear a more *infallible mark* of the *true Church*, than any that *Scripture* or *Antiquity* can furnish to the contrary.

If this will not do, and *Interest* cannot prevail, then the other *governing passion* of our Minds, *mens fears*, are tried. Instead of these allurements, the *False Teacher* now *thunders out Hell and Damnation* against us. Nothing but *Curses* and *Anathema's* to be expected by us if we continue firm in our Faith. And it shall be none of the *Prophets* nor his *Churches* fault, if all the Horrors and Miseries of this present life be not employ'd against us, in charity, to prevent our falling into the Everlasting Punishments of the next. The

The Fourth Sermon.

125

The Truth is, I am ashamed to recount what *unworthy* means some have not been ashamed to make use of to *promote* their *Religion*, and draw us away from our *steadfastness*. *France* and *Savoy*, *Hungary* and *Germany*; The *Old World* and the *New*, have all, and that but very lately been witnesses what ways it is that *Popery* has, and does, and if ever it means effectually to prevail, must take to propagate its interest:

---*Animus meminisse horret, luctuq; refugit.*

Now he that shall be so unhappy as to suffer himself by any of these *motives*, which a constant Man might and ought to have overcome, to be seduced from the right Faith; he may deserve indeed to be *pitied* now, but I fear he will hardly be hereafter *excused*.

But it is not sufficient to secure ourselves against this *danger*. He that will be *constant* in his *Religion*, as he ought to be, must see,

2^{dly}, That he be not too apt to entertain an *ill Opinion* of it.

For if it be *Obstinacy* on the one hand, not to admit of any Conviction tho' never so clear and reasonable; it is certainly

The Fourth Sermon.

tainly a great *Weakness* on the other, to be affrighted at every shadow of an *Argument*, and to put it in the power of every little Disputer to *prejudice* us against our *Religion*, because one who is its professed Enemy, rails against it, and pretends it is a very ill One.

He would, I believe, be thought a very credulous person indeed, who should begin to stagger and fall into a trembling, tho' he saw himself upon *plain* and *even Ground*, because a bold and fanciful man is very positive that 'tis a *precipice*. And doubtless that Man is no less to be pitied, that is frightened for fear he should be in the wrong, tho' he has the undoubted Authority of *Scripture* and *Antiquity*, nay, and even of *Sense* and *Reason* too on his side, as often as every *Common-place Trifler* shall think fit to run over his division upon the *Church*, the *Antiquity*, *Succession*, *Infallibility* of it; and, without either Modesty or Proof, call us *Hereticks*. If Men have *Reason* on their side, if they have *Scripture* for what they say, let them on *God's Name* produce it: We are always ready to consider and to submit to such convictions. But otherwise to think to persuade us that we are in utter darkness
when

when we see the Sun shining in our faces ; That we must be damned for not believing that what we *see*, and *tast*, and know, to be but a bit of *Bread*, is not the *Body of a Man* ; That they are not *Infalible*, who are actually involved in the grossest *Errors* ; In a word, That our *Church* had no being before *Luther*, every Article of whose Faith is founded upon the Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, and has been professed in all Ages of the *Church* from the *Apostles* to this day ; this is certainly one of the most unreasonable things in the whole World, and what ought not by any means to stagger our *stedfastness*.

And now having secured our selves on both these sides, it only remains to preserve our Constancy ;

3dly, That if at any time any Arguments should be offer'd to us that may deserve our regard, we then be sure to give them that due and wise *Examination* that we ought to do.

It is a very great *Weakness*, and indeed a very great *fault* in many persons, that if at any time they begin to doubt in their *belief* of any part of their *Faith*
K which

The Fourth Sermon.

which they have been taught to *profess*, they presently abandon their own *Guides*, and run for satisfaction to those who are the professed Enemies of their *Religion*. From henceforth they hear nothing but what is ill of their *Church*; they are taught more and more to suspect the way that they are in; and then 'tis odds but a very little examination suffices to make them leave it.

This is certainly a very great fault, and will one day prove of very dangerous consequence. What such persons may think of *changing* their *Religion*, I cannot tell; but sure I am, our greatest Charity will hardly enable us to entertain any very comfortable Opinion of them. Nor are they such as those that we either say, or believe may be *saved*, notwithstanding the *errors* and *corruptions* of that *Church* with which they Communicate.

He that will make a safe change from one *Religion* to another, must not think it enough to enquire into one or two *points*, and having received a satisfaction in them, embrace all the rest at a venture for their sakes; but he must pass distinctly through every *Article* in debate. He must enquire, not only whe-

whether the *Church* of which he is at present a Member, be not mistaken in some points, it may be there is no *Church* in the World that is absolutely free from all kind of Error; But whether those mistakes be of such a consequence, that he cannot communicate any longer with it on the account of them. When this is done, the greatest difficulty will still remain, to examine with the same diligence every *Article* of that other *Church* to which he is tempted: For else, tho' he should have reason to forsake his own *Church*, he will yet be but little advantaged if he goes to another that is as bad, or, it may be, worse than that. If there he should find the most part well, yet so that there are but any One or Two things so *Erroneous* as to oblige him to *profess* what he thinks to be *false*, or to *practice* what is *unlawful*, even this will be sufficient to hinder him from *reconciling* himself to it. And in all this, there must be a serious, and diligent, and impartial search. There must be no prejudice in favour of the One, or against the Other; no desire that the Truth should be on this side, rather than on that: In short, nothing must be omitted, whereby he might

The Fourth Sermon.

reasonably have got a better Information. And to all this Care, there must be added fervent *Prayer* to God for his assistance. He who falls away from his *first Faith* on any lesser conviction than this, can never excuse himself from a criminal lightness in a matter of such concern. And for him that sincerely does this, I shall, for my part, be content that he should leave the *Church of England*, whenever he can be thus convinced that any other, but especially that the *Church of Rome* is a *safer way to Salvation*.

And this may suffice to have been said to the first particular; What that *stedfastness* in Religion is, to which our *Text* exhorts us. I go on 2dly to shew,

II. Upon what *Motives* it was that the *Apostle* here stirred up the *Christians* to whom he wrote, and that I am now in like manner to exhort you, to such a *stedfastness*.

Now these our *Text* reduces to this One General Consideration; That they both understood their danger, and were expressly forewarn'd by his *Epistle* how careful it would behove them to be, to
arm

arm themselves against it: *Ye therefore, Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, Beware.* And doubtless it is not only a great security, but ought to be also a great engagement to such a vigilance, to be thus expressly forewarned of our danger. And he who either neglecting or despising the Admonition, suffers himself to be seduced from his own *steadfastness*, must certainly be utterly inexcusable both in the sight of *God* and *Man* for his Inconstancy.

But that which will aggravate this neglect yet much more, is the consideration of those *Motives* by which the *Apostle* here cautions them to *Beware*, and which therefore I must lay a little more distinctly before you. Now such were especially these two.

1st. The *dangerousness* of those *seducers* that were crept in amongst them: And this not so much in respect of their *cunning* and *diligence*, tho' that too were considerable; as of the *motives* they used to draw them from their *steadfastness*. There are, it may be, scarce any two things in the World, the weakness and corruption of Man's Nature consider'd, more apt to seduce, than an

II. Chap.
ver. 18.

ease Practice, supported with *high Pretences*; when both the way that is offer'd is extremely agreeable to our loose inclinations, and the *Proponent* wonderfully confident in the tender of it; And both these *St. Peter* here tells us, were to be found in the *Hereticks* against whom he forewarns them: And indeed 'twas upon this account especially, that he seemed to be so apprehensive of their prevailing. *For when (says he) they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness.* And therefore, as he said before, ver. 2. *Many shall follow their pernicious, or rather, as both the Original Greek, and our own Marginal Note read it, their loose, their lascivious ways.* But,

2dly. Another danger there was, and that no less to be considered than the foregoing. The *Christians* to whom he wrote, were under some trial and persecution for the Faith of *Christ*, and these *Hereticks* who chiefly provided for the ease and quiet of this present life, had found out a remedy against that danger too. They taught, That it was lawful on these occasions to dissemble, or even to deny their Faith, and not to run any such hazards for it. Now this to weak
minds

minds could not but be a strong temptation to comply with them. Men, for the most part, are very easie in believing that, which they very much desire should be true. And therefore no wonder if our *Apostle* thought himself highly concern'd amidst all these dangers, to exhort them to *beware, lest being led away with the error of the wicked, they should fall from their own stedfastness.*

Such was the state of these *Christians*; and I shall not need to make any Application. But now, if as we have seen their dangers, so we shall also consider the *Arguments* which the *Apostle* here urges to confirm their Constancy, we shall be forced to acknowledge them to be such, as ought in all reason to have prevailed with them. For,

1st. As to the *temptations* before mentioned, they are indeed but too apt to seduce, because we are few of us so wise or so good as we ought to be: but to an upright and sincere *Christian*, they will appear exceeding inconsiderable, and even detestable. *Confidence* and *Assurance* stagger weak minds: but if destitute of solid reason, they only argue to wise men the vanity of the Undertaker, and

The Fourth Sermon.

render the Man and his Cause the more ridiculous. And for the other *dangers*, the *fear of Persecution*, and the *looseness of their Morals*; he must be a strange sort of Christian indeed, whom such considerations can prevail with to *fall from his steadfastness*, and hardly worth the while for any Church to get or to preserve. And tho' I should be glad by any honest and Christian means to promote the Interests, and enlarge the Borders of the *Church of England*, yet I must confess, that I am so little concern'd for such *Members* as these, that on the contrary I could almost wish that all those who will not be perswaded to live *Christianly* in our *Communion*, would be so kind to us as to live *Unchristianly* out of it, rather than in it. The loss of Ten thousand such *Profelytes* would only lessen our *number*, but neither our *Honour* nor our *Interest*; nay, perhaps, would rather help to promote both: For I should then begin to hope, that *God* had indeed a Blessing in store for us, could I once see these *Jonas's* cast out, for whose sake, perhaps, it is that the present *Storm* is fallen upon us; and whose departure from us, may therefore, for ought I know, be the likeliest means to restore to us the Blessing of Peace and Security again. But

But if there be then nothing in these *temptations* that should draw us aside from our *stedfastness*, I am sure,

2dly. There is more than enough in what *St. Peter* here offers, to engage us to continue firm to it. And because I may not now enlarge my self, I will rather point it out to you, than insist upon it. For,

1st. It is with *us* now, as it was with the *Christians* in *St. Peter's* time: Those who would draw us away from our *stedfastness* to the true *Catholic Faith*, would bring in dangerous, I am unwilling with the *Apostle* to say *dammable Heresies*, in the stead of it. We do indeed charitably hope, That they who by the Providence of God have been born in a *different Communion* from us, and bred up all their lives not only in an utter *ignorance* of the *right Faith*, but in an irreconcilable *hatred* to it; who have been taught to *damn* us as *Heretics* and *Schismatics*, and to value themselves upon the score of their own *pretended Catholicism*, if they are otherwise sincere in that Faith which they profess, and repent them truly of their sins, but especially of their *uncharitableness* to those that differ from

from them, may, through the extraordinary mercy of God, be saved, notwithstanding such their *Errors*. But for us, who know their delusions; that whilst they *damn* all others as *Hereticks*, they are indeed themselves the most perverse and obstinate that ever were; should we forsake our *Truth*, and go over to them, that little *Argument* so often used on these occasions, That we *confess* men may be saved in *their Church*, but that they utterly *deny* they can be so in *Ours*, and therefore that it is better to be on *theirs*, i. e. the safer side, would stand us in small stead; and for all this *Sophistry*, we should certainly run a very great hazard of being *damn'd* for *falling away from our own stedfastness*. But,

2dly. A second *Motive* which our *Apostle* here offers to engage us to such a *constancy*, will arise from the consideration of the exceeding great *punishment* that shall be the consequence of such an Apostacy. Now that in this case was so much the more to be consider'd, in that the punishment which *St. Peter* here speaks of, was to fall upon them even in this present world. The *Prophecies* of Christ for the *Destruction* of the Jews being now just ready to be accomplish'd,
and

and in which the *Apostatizing Christians* were also to be involved. But however, I neither have, nor would desire to have any such prospect with reference to the *Seducers* and their *Profelytes* in our days, whose *Conversion*, tho' I heartily wish, yet, I thank God, I never did, I hope I never shall desire their *Destruction*: yet certainly the Argument ought never the less to be consider'd, because it respects only the *Miseries* of another life. There is more than enough in the consideration of *Eternal Torments*, to move the most indifferent person both to consider, and, if it may be, to prevent the enduring of them. And however men may please to put the *Evil Day* far from them, and hope that it shall not, because it is their Interest that it should not, too soon overtake them: yet neither can any of us say how soon it may come upon us; and were it at never so great a distance, yet let us but remember that when it does come, it brings an *Eternity* along with it, and we shall be forced to confess, That no present Considerations, how great soever they may seem to be, are yet fit to stand in competition with it.

He must be a very foolish, or a very necessitous man indeed, that would part
with

The Fourth Sermon.

with the certain reversion of a Thousand Pounds a Year, for the obtaining a present Penny. And yet such, or rather God knows infinitely greater, is the folly of that man, who for any secular advantages whatsoever, sells his Soul; and thereby not only loses his title to all the Joys and Glories of Heaven, but exchanges them for a dreadful Portion of *Fire* and *Brimstone* for ever.

Blessed Saviour! What is there in all those little Enjoyments men here pursue with so much greediness, that for the sake of them We should *deny Thee*, and that Faith which must save us when we *appear* before thee in *Judgment*! Behold! yet a little while, and there We must stand to render a strict Account of all our actions, and *receive according to what we have done in the body, whether it be good or evil*. And what then will all these Interests and Advantages avail us? *What profit shall we then have*, tho' we could have *gain'd the whole World*, when we *shall have lost our own Souls* for the doing of it? How will it then please us, that we have renounc'd our Faith to preserve those little Enjoyments that are now no more; but the sad punishment of the foul *Apostacy* to which

which they have tempted us, will continue for ever? Certainly, were the *complying Hypocrite* but capable of reflecting what shall be the end of his *Apostacy*; could he but once think with the Prophet, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings*? he would need no other motive to convince him of the folly of such *Courtly compliance*, and to keep him from *falling away from his own stedfastness*.

3dly. But the *Apostle* adds yet another *Motive*, and which having mention'd, I shall conclude. We have seen the *sad*, the *unspeakable*, and what is yet more, the *eternal misery* of him that falls from his *stedfastness*. Could I now represent to you the as infinite Reward of the *constant Christian*; could I delineate to you but a small part of those *Joys* which are prepared for such an One; what an illustrious *Crown of Glory* shall adorn his triumphant Head to all *Eternity*: I might then hope to have fully accomplish'd the design of this *Exhortation*, and to have effectually secured you against *falling away from your stedfastness*.

But this is an *Argument* above my Capacity to illustrate. *Eye hath not seen, 1 Cor. II, nor ear heard, nor does it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared*

The Fourth Sermon.

pared for them that love him. We have neither *thoughts* to imagine any thing comparable to its greatness, much less *words* to express it. And methinks even this should be enough to recommend it to us, that we are not able to express it. That its Excellency so far surpasses whatever experience we can pretend to of any *felicity* in *this life*, that we cannot so much as found upon it any tolerable apprehensions of the *Joy* and *Glories* of the other. At least, this I am sure, that it ought to be more than enough to convince you, how incomparably more worthy our desires and pursuits such a reward of our *firmness* is, than whatsoever can be offered to draw us aside from it.

And now having shown you both what it is to be truly *stedfast* in our *Faith*, and how great an *Obligation* there lies upon us so to be; what remains, but that I briefly *close* all with the last particular I proposed to speak to,

III. How highly *necessary* in its self, but especially how *advantageous* to this great end it is, that we should all of us endeavour what in us lies, *To grow in Grace, and in the Knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?*

I could

I could wish I had some longer time to improve, as I ought, this great and useful *Exhortation*. But I have insisted too long already, and therefore may not enlarge upon it. The *duty*, in short, recommended to us is *this*; That we should seriously endeavour according to our several opportunities, to *encrease every day in our Knowledge and Understanding of the Gospel of Christ, and in a suitable practice and performance of it*. And he who truly makes it his business to do this, need never fear *falling away from his steadfastness*. His *Knowledge* will teach him what is the *right way*, and the *Grace* of God rooted in his heart, will establish him, that no *unworthy Considerations* shall ever be able to draw him aside from it.

1. For what concerns the former of these, *Knowledge*, he must understand but very little of the true *Spirit of Christianity*, that is not able at the first sight to discover the illusion of those *false Teachers*, that are at present the most busie amongst us.

* *Christianity* is a *Gospel of Peace and Charity*: It commands us to *love* and to *do good to all men even our very enemies. To bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for those that*

Mat. v. 44.

The Fourth Sermon.

that despitefully use us and persecute us. And can those be its Disciples, who scatter nothing but *hatred* and *malice*, *confusion* and *disorder*, wherever they come; and make it a matter of *conscience* to root out and destroy from off the earth, all those that differ from them? The very *foundation* of whose *Religion* consists in a *Maxim* of the most detestable uncharitableness, *That all must be damned that are not of their Persuasion?*

* *Christianity* is a *wise* and *reasonable Religion*; a *Religion* becoming a most *wise God* to plant, and *rational creatures* to embrace. But our *new Teachers* are for a *blind* and *unreasonable Piety*: They are for a *Faith* and a *Worship* full of the *greatest contradictions*: And esteem the true *Character* of a thorough-pac'd *Believer* to be, to *believe* not only without any *just grounds*, but even *contrary to the common Sense and Reason* of mankind.

* *Christianity* is an *honest*, an *upright*, a *sincere Religion*; a *Religion* that requires the *greatest plainness* and *simplicity* in all our *words* and *actions*. And can those be *Christians* who are wholly made up of *Fraud* and *Disimulation*; who *palliate* the very *Doctrine* they *profess*; deny the
very,

very *Articles* of their *Faith*, when it is requisite thereby to seduce men to their *Party*; and plainly show that they value not what they do or say, as often as the *mother-interest* of their *Church* requires them to *deceive*.

* Christianity teaches us to worship 1 Tim. ii. 5.
but *One God*, and *one only Mediator* between *God* and *Man*, *Christ Jesus*. But our *New-Masters* are not thus content: They set up, if not more *Gods*, yet I am sure more *Objects* of their *Religious Worship*, more *Mediators* than *one*; and teach men to address their *Prayers* more frequently through the *Merits* and *Intercession* of their *new Advocates*, to whose *Patronage* they have committed themselves, than through His who is the true *Christians only Advocate*, *Christ* blessed for ever.

* Christianity forbids us to make any 2d Com.
graven Images, the *likeness* of any thing in *Heaven* above, to *Bow down* before it, and *worship* it. These *false Prophets* set up their *Images* in every *Church*, and *bow down* to the work of their hands. For this end they *consecrate* them with many *Abominations*. And however some think fit to *dissemble* it, yet others speak it *boldly out*, as the *Doctrine* of their

L Church,

Aquin. & Church, That the very same Religious
hisSchool. Worship is to be given to the Cross of
Christ, that is paid to Him that suffered
upon it.

1 Cor. xiv. * Christianity commands us to pray in
a tongue which the Church understands,
that so the unlearned may be able to say
Amen at our giving of thanks. Our
New Guides direct men to pray in a
tongue which to be sure the people do
not, and which sometimes even the Priest
too that officiates, understands as little
as they.

* Christianity is a Religion that teaches
men to be meek and humble, not to think
of themselves above what they ought to
think; but when they have done all, to say,
they are unprofitable servants. But our
new Teachers have not so learnt of Christ.
They know a little better how to value
their own performances. Instead of
saying they are unprofitable servants,
they teach men to value themselves on
the account of their Merits; to look
upon Heaven to be but an equal recom-
pence of their Piety; nay, yet more,
that they may live so as to make God a
Debtor to them beyond all the Glories of
Eternity, and to merit a Crown both for
themselves and others.

* In

* In short, for there is indeed no end of the *contradiction*; *Christianity* commands us to take bread, to bless it, and break it; To take Wine, bless it and pour it out; and eat and drink at the Holy Table in remembrance of that Death and Passion, which our Blessed Saviour once for all underwent upon the Cross for us. But what now do our new *Instructors*? They tell us here is neither Bread nor Wine to be eaten or drunk; that they are, I know not how, converted into the very Natural Substance of *Christ's Body* and *Blood*. That he was not offered up once for all, but is here again as truly offered as ever he was upon the Cross: That thereby a new *Expiation* is made for the Sins both of the dead and the living; and tho' our Saviour has as expressly commanded both kinds as either, yet they declare that one is sufficient for the people to partake of, and accordingly they give no more to them.

Thus you see how very little a Knowledge of our Lord and his Religion will suffice to show that there cannot be any just cause for any one to forsake the Communion of our Church, to plunge himself into such an abyss of Error and Superstition as this. And then if he be but equally advanced,

L 2

2dly, In

The Fourth Sermon.

zdy, In *Grace* too ; this will certainly secure him, that no *base motive*, no *danger* or *Interest* shall be able to prevail with him so to do.

Mat. iv. 8.

Let the *Seducer* display all the seeming *advantages* of such a *change*. Let him with his *Master* the *Devil* set us up upon the *high mountain* of our own vain *imaginations*. There let him shew us all the *Kingdoms of the Earth*, and the *glories of them* ; and to compleat the *Parallel*, let him, if he can, add too ; *All these things are mine, and to whomsoever I will, I can give them ; if thou wilt therefore renounce thy Faith, and fall down and worship me, all shall be thine*. By *Grace* we shall learn to despise them all : This will convince us, that there can be no *true honour* in *dissembling* a mans *conscience*, and prostituting his *Soul*, his *Religion*, and his *God*, to a little present advantage. That the *Riches* of this world are but *vanity* ; that the *true treasure* is in *Heaven*. In a word, That the favour of the greatest *Monarch* is not worth the purchasing, if to obtain that, we must lose the *favour of God* for ever.

Let him shift the *Scene* ; instead of all these *advantages*, let him set forth all the *dangers* that either the *Devil* can suggest,
or

or his own more furious Zeal invent; By Grace we shall be able to despise even those too. This will teach us, that there is a God in Heaven, who shall laugh them to scorn; and whose Counsel it is, that when all is done, shall stand. That if he pleases to protect us, 'tis not all their malice that can do us the least injury. But that should he either for our Punishment, or our Trial, expose us to their rage, yet still we ought with Moses, to esteem the reproach of Christ beyond all the treasures of Egypt; and chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Heb.xi.25, 26.

This was the brave resolution of the Saints of old; They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. When Nebuchadnezzar commanded the three Children in Daniel, to worship the golden image which he had set up; they regarded neither the Majesty of the King, nor the Threats of his fiery furnace: They told him plainly, That they were not careful to please him in that matter; that their God, if he pleased, both could and would deliver them out of his hand: But if not, yet Be it known to thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the

Heb.xi.35.

Dan. iii.

—15.

—16.

—17.

—18.

golden image which thou hast set up. And the same has been the spirit of our fore-runners in the Faith; they have overcome all the fiery darts of the Devil, whilst that Blessed Saviour who first gave the Command, has ever since inspired his followers with strength and resolution to fulfil it; Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do; but fear him who can cast both soul and body into hell-fire; yea, I say unto you, fear him.

Mat. x. 28.

Here then let us exercise our selves. Let us be *stedfast* to our *Faith*; and that we may be so, *Let us grow in grace, and in the knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* The *Seducers* amongst us are many; they are *diligent* and *watchful* by any means to *draw us* into their *Nets*; and God knows both their *Religion* and their *Arguments* are but too much adapted to our *Passions* and our *Interests*, and may therefore be but too likely to prevail upon us. But, *Te therefore, Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware.*

Behold, I have freely set before you this day, *Life and Death, your Duty and your Danger*; and I am very confident the *choice* is not *difficult*. I shall finish

The Fourth Sermon.

151

nish all with those words of our *Blessed Master*, Matt. x. 32. and which indeed is the sum of all I am now exhorting you to.

Whosoever shall confess me before men, Matth. x. him will I also confess before my Father — 32. which is in Heaven.

But whosoever shall deny me before — 33. men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.

L 4

O F

OF THE
Reasonableness and Terrors
 OF THE
 FUTURE JUDGMENT.

A
 SERMON

Preach'd at
 WHITE-HALL
 Before the
 PRINCESS of DENMARK,
 May 12. 1688.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answer'd, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

AS the context at first sight tells us, that the Person here spoken of, was St. Paul; so if we look into the fore-

Acts xxiii.
v. 23, &c.

Ib. v. 12,
14, 16.

foregoing *Chapter*, we shall find that he had been not long before sent down from *Jerusalem* to *Cæsarea*, by the chief Captain, *Claudius Lysias*, upon a discovery that had been made to him of certain Jews who had bound themselves under a great Curse, not to Eat nor Drink till they had slain Him.

Joh. xvi. 2.

It was none of the least instances of the blind and furious zeal of those men for their Religion, that as they thought themselves disengaged even from all the Common Offices of Humanity to those that were not of the same Country and Opinion with themselves; so here they look'd upon it to be a piece of merit, a doing of God service, by any the most base and treacherous means that could be imagined, to persecute and destroy this Holy Man, meerly for having Apostatized from it.

They saw the mischief that he did them, and they knew not how, otherwise than by his death, to prevent it. His Quality, his Education at the feet of one of their most Learned Rabbins; the zeal he once had for the Jewish worship in opposition to that to which he was now converted; His indefatigable Industry in every where drawing others out

out of those Errors and Prejudices in which Himself had been engaged ; In a word, that Astonishing *Miracle*, by which our Saviour *Christ* himself from Heaven wrought his Conversion ; All these, as they rendred him a most useful and blessed *Instrument* of propagating the *Gospel*, so did they in proportion mark him out as a peculiar object of their Rage. And accordingly we find that they left no Method, whether of open Violence, or private Treachery ; either by false Accusation, or secret Assassination, unattempted to destroy Him.

But the *Providence* of God was not to be overcome by the *malice* and *wickedness* of Men. And our Blessed Lord, who so wonderfully called him to his work, did not cease as wonderfully to protect and defend him in it : So that after all their endeavours to entrap him, we find him here more safe than ever from their Violence : In the hands of a *Centurion*, Acts xxiv. 23. to secure Him from their Malice, but not to forbid any of his acquaintance to come or minister unto him.

In this state was our *Apostle* when *Felix* sent for Him to hear what he could say concerning the *Faith* or *Gospel* of *Christ*. -v. 24.

The Fifth Sermon.

Christ. What the particulars of that *Sermon* were which upon this occasion he made to Him, we are not certainly informed. But the sum of it is recorded in the Words of my *Text*, viz. That it was of *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, and the *Judgment to come*: And those proposed to him in so plain and powerful a manner, that he was not able to dissemble the impression it made upon him,

For, as he reason'd of Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answer'd, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.

To discourse upon which words in that proper manner that I ought to do, I must desire these two things may be observed.

1st. That the *Person* to whom *St. Paul* here address'd himself, was not only a very wicked Man, and guilty in a more particular manner, as I shall presently shew, of those very crimes against which the *Apostle* here particularly inveighs; but

The Fifth Sermon.

157

but a *Heathen* too : A Man utterly unacquainted not only with the *Doctrine* of *Christ*, verse 24. but also with the *profession* of the *Jews*, vers. 22.

See *Grotius* and *Dr. Hammond* on

that *Vers*, which in our *Translation* seems to imply quite otherwise, *viz.* That he had a *perfect knowledge* of the *Jewish Law*.

2dly, That to this man *St. Paul* proposes the *Doctrine* of a *Future Judgment*, and that dreadful punishment which by consequence should hereafter be pronounced against *sinners*, not by way of *Authority*, or as a *Revelation* which the *Gospel* had made to the *World*; but as a point which his own *Reason* would tell him was most just, and fit to be believed: *He reason'd*, says my *Text*, before him, of the great obligations that lye upon Men to live *justly* and *soberly*, and of the severe enquiry that shall one day pass upon all of us, whether we have lived or no as we ought to do. And then taking of our *Text* under these *Considerations*, I suppose I shall pursue the most proper design of it, in discoursing to you on these *four* points:

1st. That the *Doctrine* of a *Judgment to come*, is so highly *reasonable*,
that

The Fifth Sermon.

that the greatest *Infidel* must be forced to confess the probability of it.

IIdly, That if there be a *Judgment to come*, and a future *state of rewards and punishments*, it cannot be doubted but that those who *live wickedly* now, shall then be in a most wretched and deplorable condition.

IIIIdly, That however *sinners* may pretend to dissemble their *belief* of this, and live as if indeed they did believe nothing at all of it; yet the greatest of them cannot chuse but *tremble* sometimes at the Apprehension of it.

Thô now,

IVthly and *Lastly*, It too often happens to such persons, as we see it did to this unfortunate Man here; That the effect of these *terrors* is not to bring them to repentance of their *sins*; but to engage them by any means to put off the thoughts of their *future state*, which are so troublesome and amazing to them.

But before I enter upon these Particulars, there is one thing which I cannot but

The Fifth Sermon.

159

but observe with reference to those other *points* mention'd in the *Text*, as part of *St. Paul's* Discourse before *Felix*, *Righteousness* and *Temperance* : And the Application whereof may serve to reproach the Complaisance of too many of his Successors among us in the *Gospel*; whose tenderness in reproving the Vices of Great Men, and sometimes even their connivance at them, do's but very illy agree either with that great Obligation which our *Holy profession* lays upon us, or with that admirable *Example* which the *Apostle* has here set us for our imitation.

It is the Character which Historians have given us of this *Felix*, That he was a man, who, in his *Government*, managed his Power with all the Violence and Injustice that can possibly be imagined; and breaking through all the Ties of Justice and Continnence, had, by the help of one *Simon* a *Magician*, gain'd the Affections of *Drusilla*, the Wife of *Azis*, King of the *Emiffeni* and lived in a state of *Adultery* with her.

Josephus,
Hist. l. 20.

Tacitus,
Hist. l. 5.

Now this being the Case of *Felix*, 'tis plain, that the Subject of *St. Paul's* Discourse was to remonstrate to him his *Injustice*, and *Intemperance*; and let him freely know, That however he might carry

The Fifth Sermon.

carry it out by his *Power* and *Authority* now, yet there was a time coming, a future *Day of Judgment*, when he should be called to a severe Account for all his *Wickedness*.

This was indeed an *Address* becoming the *zeal* of an *Apostle*, and the *Spirit* of *St. Paul*. And too plainly shews, how little we have left in us of that *Primitive* warmth which inflamed this *Holy Man*, by our different management on the like *Occasions*.

There can hardly be imagined any greater discouragement to such a freedom, than what our *Apostle* here labour'd under. To touch an *Unjust Governor* in the point of his *Violence* and *Injustice*; a *lustful Adulterer* in the business of his *Incontinence*, this one would think should have been a pretty bold undertaking for any One. But for *Saint Paul*, a *Prisoner*, one that was to appear as a *Criminal* before him; for him, instead of flattering this great Man, as his Adversary *Tertullus* had done: *Verse 2.* Instead of Applauding the great quietness which the people enjoy'd under his government, and the very worthy deeds that had been done by his providence, to call him to repent of his *Rapine* and *Cruelty*; of his

Verse 2.

his *Intemperance* and *Adultery*: and this too in the presence of that very *Woman* Verse 24. whom he much loved, and for whose sake he had done so many vile things; this was an *Honest* freedom and plainness, becoming an *Apostolical* Age; but which, I fear, in these days of ours, would be censur'd as rudeness, and indiscretion; any thing rather than a commendable *Zeal* for the *Glory* of *God*, and the *Salvation* of *Souls*.

But alas! *St. Paul* had not learnt that tender Application that is now a-days made to Great Persons. He had no Interest of his own to pursue; and therefore did not address himself after the manner of those who are more afraid of offending *Men*, than of displeasing *God*, and of disparaging their *Character*. He knew the Doctrine to be seasonable to *Felix*; and that if he pleased to make a good use of it, it might be profitable too: And he never stood to consider, whether *Felix* would like it, or no; or whether it might not perhaps provoke him to run to any Extremities against him for his freedom. In short, He had an *Unjust*, *Adulterous* Man to preach to; and he knew nothing so fit to reason of before him, as of *Righteousness*, *Temperance*,
M

The Fifth Sermon.

rance, and the Judgment to come. And had we but the same honest Courage and Indifference that he had, we should speak, not only with the same freedom that he did; but, by the Grace of God, with the same efficacy too: And poor and despicable as we are thought by many, yet in the power of that Divine Truth which we are sent to preach to the World, make the greatest Sinners tremble to think, That for all these things God will bring them to judgment.

And that this is the Case, is the first thing I am to shew:

Ist, That the Doctrine of a Judgment to come, is so highly reasonable, that the greatest Infidel cannot but acknowledge the probability of it.

In pursuance of which Point, it is not my Design to shew what Grounds the *Holy Scriptures* give us for the belief of a future Judgment, which we all of us every day profess as an *Article* of our *Faith*, and therefore cannot be supposed any of us to doubt of it. What else do we meet with almost throughout the *New Testament*, but Exhortations to live well upon this Ground, *That God has appointed*

pointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness: Acts xvii. 31. Acts xvii. 31.
 That we must all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ, Rom. xiv. 10. That we must All appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ; Every one to receive the things done in his Body, according to what he hath done, whether it be Good or Evil: 2 Cor. v. 10. 2 Cor. v. 10.
 What Revelation has there ever been more clearly made, I do not say than this, That there shall be a final Judgment, but of the manner and Circumstances of it? How the Trumpets shall sound, and the dead arise, and those that are alive be changed. How the just shall be caught up into the air, and the sinners lie groveling below, in vain crying out to the Mountains to fall upon them, and to the Hills to cover them: How the Judgment shall be set, and the Books open'd, and every man judged out of the things contained in those Books, according to his works. Then shall the Son of Man come in his Glory, and sit down upon the Throne of his Glory: And before him shall be gathered all Nations, and he shall separate them the one from the other, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats: and he shall set his Sheep on his right hand, and the Goats on his left: And he shall

Acts xvii.

31.

Rom. xiv.

10.

2 Cor. v.

10.

1 Thess. iv.

15. &c.

1 Cor. xv.

Matt. xxv.

31. &c.

The Fifth Sermon.

say to them on his right hand, Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World. But to those on the left, Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment; but the Righteous into Life Eternal.

In a word; So particular is the Account which we here find of all the Circumstances of this great *Audit*, that I scarce know any thing left unrevealed to us, but only the *Day* and *Hour* when this *Judgment* shall be: And which indeed God has in Mercy kept up from us, that so we might always live in Apprehension of that, which we can never tell how soon it may arrive.

But this is not that which my *Text* leads me to consider: And indeed, however it may be useful enough to call upon the most faithful Christians to think sometimes on this *future Judgment*; yet it would certainly be a very needless undertaking to *reason* with such Persons concerning it, and use any long Arguments to convince them of the *futurity* of it. That which I have now to do, is of a quite different nature; 'Tis
to

to offer such Reasons for the belief of a *Judgment to come*, as may convince the Greatest *Infidel* of the *probability* of it : And shew them that, whether they will believe us in other things, or no, yet here at least they cannot with any reason doubt of the Truth of our Doctrine; but must resolve to become *Good Men*, if they will not be persuaded to become *Faithful Christians*.

And indeed in this *Sceptical Age*, in which we now live, it may not, for ought I know, be altogether unreasonable, to argue sometimes with Men upon their *own Principles*. To shew them, that Religion is not a *contrivance* of *State Policy*, nor the *effect* of *Priest-craft*. That when we discourse of *another World* after this, and a *final Inquest* to pass upon all our Actions; and a *Vast Eternity* of *Rewards* and *Punishments*, according to what they now do, whether *Good* or *Evil*; we do not alarm Mens minds with false Fears, and ungrounded Terros, but speak to them a *Truth* which the very *Gentiles* themselves have universally acknowledged; nay, which their own *Consciences* will not suffer them to disbelieve, however they may sometimes endeavour to stifle their *Convictions*, and

The Fifth Sermon.

have the Impudence to deny, what at the same time, with *Felix*, they tremble to think of. In short; That whether we look into the frame and constitution of our own *Souls* within us, or contemplate the *Dispensations* of *God's Providence* in the affairs of the *World* without, they both speak to us this great Truth, That *God will bring us to Judgment*.

1. If first we look back into the *Principles* of the *Heathen Theology*, what point shall we find more universally acknowledged by them, than this of a *Judgment to come*? This we may see illustrated not only in the flights of their *Poets*, in the Harangues of their *Orators*, in the Dictates of their *Philosophers*; and all which have been particularly collected by the *Holy Fathers* of the *Church* in their Writings against them, and may be seen at large in the *Works* yet extant of *Justin Martyr*, *Eusebius*, *Theodoret* and others: But as *Tertullian* well observes, even in their common Conversation, in which Men usually the most speak according to their *Natural impressions*, they still testified the same belief: And by calling *God to witness* and judge of their *Actions*; by commending them-

themselves and their Cause to God, when they could find no remedy or relief from Men, they plainly shew'd it to be a *principle* rooted in their very *Natures*, That there is a *God* who sees and observes what passes here below, and will one day set to rights all the present seeming irregular dispensations of his Providence in the Government of the World, and *render to every man according to his Works.*

I shall not in this place enter so far into this *Argument*, as to shew you in the particular expressions of the Ancient *Heathens* themselves, how clearly and peremptorily they have deliver'd themselves as to this Point of a *Judgment to come*. But thus much I suppose I may take the liberty to conclude from what I have already in *General* observed; That it cannot be deni'd, but that, *Christianity* set apart, the belief of a *future Judgment* must be allow'd, even upon the meer *Principles* of *Nature*, to be very highly probable, which the *Gentiles* themselves, without the help of any Divine Revelation, have so firmly and universally received.

And indeed so clear are the Evidences of it, that wheresoever we turn our eyes,

The Fifth Sermon.

whether into the Nature and Constitution of the *little World* within, or into the Government and Administration of the *greater* without us, we cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of this belief. For,

2dly, If we consider the *Nature* of our own *Souls* within us, we shall find a *Conscience*, even in the most wicked Men, that will plainly bear *witness* to this great *Truth*.

There is a certain Principle implanted in every one of us, that not only *directs* and *informs* us what we ought to do, and what to avoid ; but does moreover *check*, or *encourage* us, according as what we have done is either Good or Evil. Now upon this Sentence which our *Consciences* here pass upon all our *Actions*, we find either a *pleasure*, and *confidence*, and *satisfaction* if we have done well ; or else a *fear*, and *terror*, and *distrust*, if we have done *ill* : And this not with reference to any *Reward* we are like to receive, or any *Punishment* we may be in danger of suffering in this *present World* : The greatest *Monarchs* being no less sensible of these *Motions* within, when their *Consciences* do either *approve* or *condemn* them, than the meanest of their *Subjects* ; and both the One and the

the other, tho' the *Action* were never so secret, no less than if it had been done in the presence of the whole World.

And what is all this but a plain *Evidence* planted in our very Nature, to keep us in a continual expectation of some account to be given of our *Actions* in another World, beyond what is done in this. When the long Series of our present Lives shall be reviewed, and our *Consciences*, now our *Judges*, then become *Witnesses*, and give Testimony for or against us, according as we have done either *Good* or *Evil*.

But that which will be a yet farther Confirmation of this Argument is, That the nearer we approach to our latter End, still the more Powerful and Vigorous are these impressions of our own *Consciences* upon our Souls. How does the *Sinner* then begin with Horror to reflect upon his Life past; and to hate and fear the Consequence of his Evil doings, when he is just ready to die, and by consequence is passed all apprehension of any farther inquest in this Life, more than he did at the time of his commission of them? Whilst the Good and Vertuous man embraces Death with such a Quiet and Composure,

sure, and oftentimes with such a sensible Joy and Satisfaction, as if he were about to receive some great Good by it, to be sure did not Fear any Evil from it.

This certainly can be nothing else but a still more sensible evidence of the *Belief* of a *Judgment to come*, rooted in our very *Natures*, and that there is to be a *Restitution* of rewards and *Punishments* in another *Life*, besides what is made to our *Actions* in this.

3. To all which if we add, 3dly, The farther strength that will be given to this Principle, from the Consideration of the *present Irregular Dispensations* of *God's Providence*, as they seem to us, in *this World*, to oblige us to expect some *Judgment* in the *Other*; I do not see what the greatest *Sceptick* can have to oppose against so firm and clear a *Demonstration* of it.

It is, I presume, agreed among all sorts of Persons that admit the *Being* of a *God*, that as he is the *Author* of all *Perfections* in all other things, so he can have nothing *Defective*, or *Imperfect* in *Himself*. That as this *World* was not at first made by *Chance* and *Fortune*, but by a most *Wise*, and *Good*, and *Powerful God*; so neither is it now *Govern'd*

The Fifth Sermon.

171

vern'd by Chance, but by the Providence of the same God who first made it.

Now if God be Infinitely *Perfect*, then he must be *Perfectly Wise*, and *Just*, and *Good*; and we may as well suppose him not to be *God*, as not allow him to be all this. But if he be so, and if this *World* be indeed subject to the Guidance of his *Providence*, then We must of necessity acknowledg a *Judgment to come*. It being plain, that as the Affairs of men are order'd in this *Present World*, they shew but very little sign of an exact *Justice* and *Goodness* in the Administration of them. The best Men now being oftentimes the most Unfortunate; and the most Profligate Miscreants, the most happy, in the Enjoyments of the Good things of this Life.

Either therefore we must deny that there is a *God*, altogether; or that the *world* is *Govern'd* by Him: Or we must say, that he is not *Just* and *Good*, and therefore minds not what becomes of those that are so, which is in effect to say he is not *God*: Or else that he is *Impotent* and *Ignorant*; either does not *know* how things pass here below, or tho' he does

does know, yet is not able to redress them; and this again destroys the very *Notion* of a *God*, which includes an *Infinite Perfection* in *Power* and *Knowledge*, no less than in *Goodness* and *Justice*: Or lastly, If there be a *God*, and that *God* does take care of the *Affairs* of men; and is *Good* and *Just*; and has such a *Knowledge* and *Power* as we say he has; then it must remain, that there shall be a *future Judgment*, in which all these uncertain, irregular *Dispensations* of his *Providence*, as they appear to us, shall be cleared and set right, and the *Good* and *Bad* receive the just recompence of what their *Actions* here have deserved.

Seeing then we cannot with any reason doubt either that there is a *God*, or that this *God* is *Just*, or that his *Providence* does indeed *superintend* over the *Affairs* of the *World*; and yet 'tis plain that things now are not order'd with so exact a *Justice* as a *Divine Providence* does require: It must remain, that neither can we with any reason doubt, but that there is to be a *Judgment to come*, in which *God* will make a perfect *Demonstration* of his *Goodness* and *Justice* to every man according to what he has done in the *Body*, and of which our
Con-

The Fifth Sermon.

173

Consciences, as we have before shown, shall then render a most exact account.

Which being so; I shall not need say much to shew,

Idly. That then it cannot be doubted, but those who *live Wickedly now*, must expect to be *hereafter* in a most *wretched* and *deplorable condition*.

This is the plain, indeed the necessary Consequence of the foregoing *Reflections*. For if the very End of this *Judgment* be, as we have said, to make a great and Eternal Demonstration of *God's Justice* in his Dispensations towards the Children of men, then in the words of *St. Paul*, *Rom. ii. 6.* *He must render to every man according to his works. To them who by Patient Continuance in will doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, Eternal Life: Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of man that does Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.* *Rom. ii. 6, &c.*

If the present Administration of Affairs in this Life, be not exactly according to the strict rules of Equity and Justice; *God* permitting the *Righteous man*

to

The Fifth Sermon.

to struggle under the *Pressures* of an *Adverse Fortune*, and the *Wicked* and *Un-
godly* to *Prosper* in their *Wickedness*; yet may this be very well *Reconcilable* with his *Justice*, both because he may have other excellent *Ends*, to serve by such an *Irregularity*, and for that he has yet an *Opportunity* remaining in his hands, abundantly to *recompence* all the *sufferings* of the *One*, and to *Punish* all the *Wickedness* of the *Other*. And instead of concluding from these *Promiscuous events* now, that *God* is not *Just*, or does not regard the *Affairs* of this *World*; that he knows not, neither understands how things pass here below, nor has power sufficient to *Govern* them as in *Justice* he ought to do; I have already shown that we ought rather to infer, That this *Life* is only a *State* of *Trial*, that the great time of *Retribution* remains in another *World*, when all these *Irregularities* shall be set right, and the *Goodness*, the *Justice*, the *Power* of *God* be made known in a most severe and exact *Sentence* which shall then pass upon every man, in the day when he shall judge the *World* in *Righteousness*.

But if *God* not only suffers the *Wicked* to *Flourish* now, but shall hereafter also
let

let them go *Unpunish'd*; if he permits them to enjoy the *Fruits* of their *Sins* in this *present World*; and will take no Care to avenge himself upon them in the next; How then shall the Judge of all the Earth do right? Or what is there more remaining whereby to justify God in his doings, who thus apparently connives at *Sinners*; and neither asserts his Cause in their ruine here, nor will call them to any account for all their *Wickedness* hereafter?

Gen. xviii.
25.

It remains therefore, that as certainly as that God is *Just*, and therefore must some time or other render to every man according to his works, the *Sinner* shall one day receive a dreadful Sentence of Horror and Misery from that God, neither whose Knowledge he can escape, nor whose Power he is able to withstand: Who sees all his most secret Villanies now, and will hereafter bring him to Judgment for them. But now what or how great that Punishment is which remains for *Sinners* in the other World, this is what we cannot pretend by any Natural way of Reasoning precisely to define. And yet thus much I think even our own Reason may suggest to us.

Ist.

The Fifth Sermon.

1st. That it must be some very great *Punishment* which a *long Life* of *Sin* and *Impiety*, and that too heightned with all the Aggravating Circumstances of being committed against *Knowledge*, against the *checks* of our *Consciences* to the contrary, it may be against *Vows* and *Resolutions* of doing better; nay possibly, against many special means and methods of *God's Providence* to bring us to *Repentance*, must deserve, and therefore in all probability shall receive.

2^{dly}. That as there are different *Kinds* and *Degrees* of *Sinners* now; All men do not rise up to an equal pitch of *Wickedness*, nor *begin* so *soon*, nor *continue* so *long* in their Evil doings; nor it may be have it in their *Power* to do so much mischief as other *Sinners* do; so in all reason we may believe that there shall also be different *degrees* of *Punishment* suitable to all these, and some be condemned to a much more Severe and intollerable infliction than others.

To both which remarks I cannot tell, whether I may not add,

3^{dly}. That seeing the *Soul* is a *Spirit* in its own nature capable of *Immortality*; having neither any dependance on the *Body*, nor being exposed to any
of

of those Casualties that are the *Causes* of the *Corruption* of all other things which we see *Decay* and *Perish* here; and there being no Declaration any where made to us, that it is the *Will* of *God* ever to *extinguish* them after they are gone out of the *Body*; We may, I think, have some cause to fear, whether our *Souls* being capable of an *Eternal existence*, the *Punishment* also which in that *last Judgment* they shall be doom'd to, may not be for all *Eternity*.

And all this the *Principles* of *Natural Reason*, and the *Dictates* of our *Consciences* direct us to, and the greatest *Infidel* must be forced at least to confess the *Probability* of it. And indeed, However Wicked men may endeavour to dissemble their *Belief* of these things, and live so as if they truly did not give the least credit to them, yet are their *Fears* many times too strong for them, and discover their Apprehensions, whether they will or no. This is the next *Point* I proposed,

III^{dly}. That however *Sinners* may Live as if they *Believed* nothing
all this, yet the greatest of them

N

can-

The Fifth Sermon.

cannot chuse but *Tremble* sometimes at the Apprehension of it.

So *Felix* did, and so we have been told of many others that have done likewise. Men may pretend to out-brave *Hell* and *Eternity* at a distance, may laugh at our Discourses concerning *another World*, and the *Judgment* that is to pass on all our *Actions* in it; and make it a Piece of *Wit* and *Gallantry* not to believe any thing of them; But I have seldome heard of that man that could look *Damnation* in the face when he came within prospect of it. There is a certain time when all men begin to acknowledge the Power of Religion; and if not to believe a *Heaven*, yet at least to fear a *Hell*. *Atheism* and *Profaneness* are things that pass well enough while there is no great cause to reflect on the danger of them: Whilst mens *Pulse* beats *strong*, their Years run *briskly* on; their *Condition* is *Easie* and *Prosperous*; they go on in their sins without Controul, and therefore without considering either what they do, or whether they are running.

But no sooner does any Trouble and
Adver-

Adversity come upon them : If their *prosperity* fails them, and the *iniquity* of their ways begins to encompass them round about ; If age and *infirmities* call upon them to think what they have done, or where 'tis they must next go ; but presently all their *Schemes* and *Hypotheses* vanish : They awake as Men out of a deep sleep, and too late begin, if not to convince themselves that there is a *Judgment* to come, yet to tremble with horror, lest perhaps there should be One.

But alas ! What is for the most part the *consequence* of these *Terrors* ? Is it even now at least to fit and prepare themselves for it ? No, They are afraid of a *future judgment*, and cannot endure the thoughts of it ; yet still they neglect to provide against it. This was the last point I proposed to consider, and is evidently the sad condition of many of these Men : viz.

IVthly, That the use they make of these reasonings concerning a *Judgment* to come, is not to bring themselves thereby to a *repentance* of their *Evil-doings* ; but rather to endeavour by any means to put off

N 2

these

The Fifth Sermon.

these thoughts of their *future State*, that are so *troublesome* and *uneasy* to them.

There is not perhaps any one thing in the World that ruins more Souls, than this unhappy *Method* so common with most *sinners*, of still putting off the business of Religion to a more *convenient season*. They cannot endure the thoughts of *another World*, and that *Judgment* which we must every one of us undergo in it; They *tremble* at the reflection of it, and delude themselves with a *future prospect* of resolving in good earnest to prepare themselves for it; but like *Felix* in the *Text*, they put off this work to *another Time*, without ever fixing when that *Time* is to come; and it happens to them, as it did to him, that for the most part it never comes at all.

I believe there are but few in the World so wicked as never to have had their *lucid intervals* of Piety and Religion; nor occasions both to consider of a *Judgment to come*, and how much it would import them to provide for it. On the contrary, I am apt to think the greatest part of *Sinners* go on in their *sins* now, with a confidence and resolution

tion of *repenting* some time or other: But still some thing or other interposes to prevent their doing of it; and *Death* overtakes them before they are aware; and they go out of this World or ever they have made the least provision for another.

I shall not need to say how unreasonable such a *procrastination* is, even upon those *Principles* of *Natural Reason* on which I have hitherto proceeded in the managing of this *great Argument*. For if we have so much *reason* as we have seen, to believe that there is to be a *Judgment to come*, in which we must render a strict account of all our Actions; and every days experience convinces us of the shortness and uncertainty of our present life, and the little dependence we can make upon it for the time to come: If in that *judgment* the state and condition of *sinners* shall, without controversy, be very grievous; and there be no way to promise our selves either any peace of *Conscience* now, or any hopes of *Happiness* hereafter, but only by acting in such a manner, and putting our selves in such a state, that we need not be either ashamed to live, or afraid to die: It must then certainly be most fit and reasonable

for all of us to begin personally to consider and do like Men, and no longer continue in those *sins* which are our torment now, and which, should we chance to die ere we have repented of them, will prove our ruin for ever.

And all this the very *light of reason*, and the *dictates of natural Conscience* speak to us to call us to *repentance*, and to convince us of the *Danger* and *Unreasonableness* of the least delaying of it. And if there should chance to be any here present, whose Wickedness and Infidelity render this discourse as seasonable to them now, as *St. Paul's* once was to *Felix*; I cannot but hope they may meet with somewhat in this *reasoning* that may have the same Effect upon them, but with a better Consequence than the *Apostles* had upon that wretched Man; may serve not only to awaken their fears of a *judgment to come*, but to stir them up to an immediate *provision* for it.

But it is time now to remember, that I am speaking all this while to a *Christian Assembly*; and therefore to such, as will admit of yet more lively persuasives of a *future Judgment*; and of the *Great* and *Eternal Torments* that await the Wicked after it. And

And I shall not need to say how much our *Religion* has discovered to us, to make the *sinner* tremble at the apprehension of that *dreadful Inquest*, which the best *Christian* cannot think of without amazement.

For indeed, where is the *Soul* so well established, so secure of its own sincerity, as to be able to endure the *Horrors* of that *day*, when the end of all things being come, the *World* its *self* shall begin to tremble and fall into its ancient *Chaos*. When the *sun*, and *moon*, and *stars* shall be darkened: the *mountains* shall quake, and the powers of *Heaven* be shaken. When the *Earth* shall be set on fire; the *Heavens* shall be shrivell'd up as a scroll, the *Elements* also shall melt with fervent heat. When the *Trumpet* shall sound, and the *Graves* be opened, and the *Dead* arise; and our *Consciences* begin to fly in our *Faces*, and represent to us the *sins* we have committed; the means and opportunities of *repentance* which we have neglected; and the *Everlasting punishment* to which we are now just ready to be condemn'd.

O! the *terrors* of that *time*, when being distracted with all these amazements, we shall begin in vain to cry out to the

The Fifth Sermon.

Mountains to fall upon us, and to the Hills to cover us ! When we shall be able no where to see any hope or comfort remaining to us. If we look up to *Heaven*, that place which we shall now never be able to approach ; behold there our *Judge* with all his *Holy Angels* about him, *pronouncing* a bitter sentence of Indignation and Wrath, and Eternal misery against us. If we cast down our eyes below ; nothing is there to be seen, but the wretched Companions of our misery ; *Weeping and wailing , and gnashing of teeth.* The fire already bursting out, in which we are to perish, and yet to be preserved alive for ever ; and the *Devils* ready to drag us into that place of Torments.

How shall we then *Curse* our *Sins*, that have brought us into this desperate, lost estate ? And too late begin to consider the wisdom of those happy men , who have been persuaded timely to think of, and to provide for *Eternity*. *We fools counted their lives madness , and their latter end to be without honour.* We once laugh'd at their folly, and smiled to see them pine away themselves in penitential exercises , whilst we freely indulged our Ease and our Debauches.

But

Wild, v.

41

But now *they are numbred among the Children of God, and their lot is among the Saints.* — 3.

And now when all these, and infinitely more *terrors* than I am able to express, are included in that one thought of the *judgment to come*; tell me O wretched sinner! Canst thou hear me *reasoning* this day before thee of these things, and not tremble at the Apprehension of them? And if the very thoughts of a *judgment to come*, be thus dreadful to thee now, canst thou yet think thy self unconcern'd to provide against that time, when thou and I, and all who are here present, must prepare to appear before it?

Rather, Let this reflection engage every one of us to examine our selves, how we shall then be able to give up our Accounts: And let us so judge our selves, that we may not be condemn'd for ever. *Let us, whilst we have yet the time, confess our wickedness, and be sorry for our sins. Let us turn from our evil way, and from the violence that is in our hands, that our iniquity may not be our ruine. Let us fly to our Judge, whilst we are yet in the way, before we go down into the Grave where there is no repentance.* And

The Fifth Sermon.

And if we thus improve the *Terrors* of the *Lord* now, we shall hereafter with great confidence expect them; And that *great day*, so dreadful to the *unprepared sinner*, shall be to us a day of joy and *triumph* with all *Saints*,

Which *God* of his mercy grant it may be to every one of us, for his dear *son Jesus Christ* his sake: To whom be ascribed, as is most due, *Salvation*, and *Glory*, and *Power*, and *Praise*, and *Dominion*, for ever and ever, *Amen*.

OF THE
CAUSES
OF

Mens Delaying their *Repentance*.

A
SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

Febr. 27. 1689.

Being the Third *Wednesday* in *Lent*.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

—Felix trembled; and answer'd,
Go thy way for this time, when I
have a convenient season, I will
call for thee.

IN which Words we have the result of
St. Paul's Discourse before Felix, con-
cerning the future Judgment, and the
Pu-

The Sixth Sermon.

—v. 24. Punishments that should one day be pronounced against sinners in it. He had sent for our *Apostle*, who was then a Prisoner at *Cæsarea*, to hear what he had to say concerning the *Faith* or *Gospel* of *Christ*.

‘*And as he reason’d of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answer’d, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*’

It was the usual method of *St. Paul* in Preaching the Gospel of *Christ*, in the first place to awaken mens fears, by declaring to them the *terrors* of a *future state*, and the strict account that we must one day render to *God* of all our *Actions*; that so being full of *Horror* at the apprehension of their danger, they might become the better disposed to hearken to those means he was afterwards to propose to them, whereby to secure them against it. And in his second *Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, vth. II. he gives us an account how effectual a preparation it commonly made for him to prevail; *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord*; i.e. as appears by the foregoing verse, this revelation of the *future Judgment*, we persuade men.

He had here in this *Felix*, a most *profligate sinner* to deal with. A man in his † *Government* violent and unjust: In his *own manners* lewd and debauch'd: He had ravish'd another mans * *Wife* out of his bosom, and lived in an open state of *Adultery* with her.

† Tacitus
Hist. lib. v.
c. 9. *says of him, That per omnem sevitiam ac libidinem,*
54. *cuncta*

ius regium servili ingenio exercuit. Et annal. l. xii. c. 54. malefacta sibi impune rarus, tanta potentia subnixo.

* Joseph. Antiq. Jud. l. 10. c. 5. pag. 616. Basil. 1544. *The Account of which see above, p. 159.*

And now what so proper to awaken his *Conscience*, and make him indeed begin to repent him of his sins, as to *reason* before him of a *Judgment to come*? What *Application* so pertinent, as to show him the particular danger of *unjust* and *intemperate* men, that is, such as himself should be exposed to in it. This was certainly the most proper *address* to such a one; and such was this of *St. Paul* to *Felix*: *He reason'd* before him of *Righteousness, Temperance, and the Judgment to come.*

And behold in my *Text*, the result of his Discourse, such as in all reason we might expect it should have been, *Felix trembled.*

And

The Sixth Sermon.

And now who would not hope for some good effect from so fair and promising a *beginning*? And that the next thing we should have heard of, should have been some such *question* to St. Paul, as the *Jews* once made on the like occasion to St. Peter and the other *Apostles*.

ACT. ii. 37. *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* This one might reasonably have been expected should have been the result of his *Terror*. But alas! We find a much different effect of it. He was indeed amazed to hear of a *judgment to come*; but he could not for all that, resolve so soon to begin to provide for it. He *trembled* to think what his condition there should be, and very probably he might intend that he would sometime or other very seriously consider how he was prepared against it. But he could not presently determine to part with his sins; and therefore he defers the time; he puts off the *Apostle* to some more convenient *season*; but we never read that ever that season came, or that he had ever any Admonition given him afterward, to repent him of his evil doings.

Felix

Felix trembled, and answer'd, Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Such was the effect of St. Paul's reasoning at this time before Felix; and I would to God we had no cause to complain, that such is too often the consequence of our *Preaching* to you. That the Knowledge which we have, and the belief which we profess of a *Judgment to come*, were so efficacious to our amendment, that we none of us needed to be called upon, no longer to defer it, but to begin in good earnest to consider how to make our Peace with God, and to provide for Eternity. But alas! I fear I have here pitch'd upon a subject never like to be out-dated. And tho' it be certainly one of the greatest Contradictions in the world, not only to *Scripture* and *Reason*, but to our own *Interests* too, and to which we are not apt to be so blind, to pretend to believe a *judgment to come*, and yet nevertheless to neglect to provide for it; yet I know not how, such is the power of our lusts, that they stop our ears against all Arguments, though
never

The Sixth Sermon.

never so clear and forcible, that would induce us to forsake them; we *tremble* to think what shall be the consequence of our *sins*, yet still we go on in the commission of them.

And now what *Argument* can I take up more *seasonable* to the present time, or indeed more fit at all times for our Consideration, than to reason a while of this great and dangerous neglect? To enquire into the *Causes* which move so many thus to delay their *Repentance*, and to offer some effectual Arguments that may convince you of the unreasonableness of it. In a word, to stir up such an *Auditory* as this, both from the example of this wretched man in the *Text*, and from the just cause we may have to fear, lest if we continue with him to put off still the time of our *Repentance*, we finally perish with him in his *Impenitence*; to hasten with all the speed we can, to return to our duty, that our *Iniquity* may not be our ruin.

And this is the design of my present Discourse, wherein I shall

First,

First, Enquire into the *Causes* that move so many to *delay* their *Repentance*, and be still putting off their provision for another World, to some more *convenient season*. And

Secondly, shall shew the *Danger* of so doing:

And by both endeavour, what I can, to engage every one that now hears Me, to a *timely*, a *speedy*, or rather to speak more properly, to a *present Repentance*. And

1st. Of the *Causes* that move so many to delay their *Repentance*; and be still putting off their provision for another World to some more *Convenient Season*.

Now those, I presume, may well be reduced to these four General Considerations. Either

1st. They do not think at all, or not to any purpose, of their *Future State*, and therefore neglect to provide for it. Or,

2^{dly}, They do not believe there is so great a necessity of *Repenting*;

Q

in

The Sixth Sermon.

in order thereunto, as we say there is. Or,

3^{dly}, They suppose they may do this hereafter as well as now. Or,

4^{thly}, Tho' they are convinced both of the necessity of their *Repenting*, and of the Reasonableness of setting presently about it, yet for all that, they cannot so soon resolve to part with their Sins, and enter on a course of Piety and Religion.

These are some of the Principal *Causes* that, I presume, may be likely to prompt Men to put off their Concern for another World; and I shall make it my Endeavour with all the plainness that I can, to shew the folly and unreasonableness of every one of them. And,

1st. There are many in the World, who do not think at all, or not to any purpose, of their *Future State*, and therefore neglect to provide for it.

It is a matter of sad Consideration, to see how very Careless and Secure
most

most men seem to be as to the Business of *another World*. They Live, if not as those who believe nothing at all of it, yet in such a manner as if they were not in the least danger of miscarrying in their way to it. They think and contrive how to manage their Affairs in this *present Life*: To *Establish* their *Health*, and to *Improve* their *Fortunes*, and add still new degrees to their *Honours* and *Dignities*. Only the *Happiness* of the *other World*, that they seem to look upon as hardly worth their Care; They leave it as a thing, that it will be time enough to provide for when they begin to come nearer to it; and 'tis no longer worth their while to trouble themselves about the good things of this.

And now what can be more unreasonable than such an *Incogitancy*? To spend all our thoughts and our endeavours, upon a few Temporal pursuits, that have neither *worth* nor *duration* to recommend them to our desires; and in the mean time never to think at all, or at least not to any purpose, of those *Joys* and *Glories* that shall continue to all *Eternity*.

Indeed, had we either never heard of any such thing as a *Judgment to Come*; or did we not believe that there is such a *State* as our Religion has revealed to us; A *State of Everlasting Happiness* if we do *Well*, but of *Eternal Punishment* if we continue to do *Ill*, there might then be some Excuse for such a neglect. And yet, even in this Case too, we ought to be very sure there was no such thing as *another World*, before we could reasonably give over the thoughts of it.

He that lives well, and denies himself some part of that Liberty, he would otherwise indulge himself *now*, out of the fear and apprehension of *another Life that is to come*, does at the most run but the little hazard of living a more Reserved and Innocent sort of Life than he needed to have done, if it shall hereafter appear that he was mistaken. Whereas he that confidently presumes there is no such thing as a *Future State*, and so neglects to provide for it, should it chance to be otherwise, must be for ever Miserable, without all possible means to reform his Error.

But

But for men to know and believe, that *God will bring them to Judgment*, Ecc. xi. 9. and they cannot tell how soon he may do it: That if they chance to be caught away in the midst of their sins, as they see thousands are every day before their eyes, they shall then be doom'd to the wretched sentence of *Everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; Mat. xxv. 41. and yet still to continue careless and unconcern'd; and not so much as spend a thought how they are prepared to stand before the *great Tribunal*; This is, doubtless, such a piece of Indiscretion, as may well deserve our pity and our wonder, but certainly will not need that I should say any thing to expose the desperate folly and unreasonableness of it.

2dly. Another cause of mens *delaying* their *Repentance*, is, That they do not believe there is so great a *Necessity* of *Repenting*, as we say there is.

This is a *Cause* which men do not indeed care so openly to profess; but yet such a one as their Actions oftentimes do but too plainly point out

to us. And I wish that even this were all; and that there were not some in the world, whose very *Principles* seem to lead them into such an opinion, so contrary to the very *nature* of *Christianity*, and so fatally ruinous to their own *Eternal Salvation*.

For 1st. Not to say any thing now to those wise men of the world, who laugh at all our discourse of *another life after this*, and of an *account to be given of all our Actions before a Divine Tribunal*; but to leave them to the convictions of their own *Consciences*, which speak loudly to them this great truth, and make them with *Felix*, still fear what they pretend not to believe: What shall we say to a more refined sort of Disputants; who acknowledging a *future Judgment*, and an *Eternal Reward* for those that do well, yet *extinguish* * in great measure all the flames of *Hell-fire*, and

The Socinians 1st. Deny *Immortality* to the wicked, Smalc. contr. Frantz, p. 415. Volkeliuſ, lib. iii. cap. 11. 12.

2^{dly}, They affirm, That they ſhall be for ever deſtroyed, Smalc. l. c. Volk. l. c. pag. 73. and cap. 33. pag. 133. Socinus in 1 John 2. 17. Bibl. Fr. Pol. p. 178. Woltzogen. in Mat. iii. 12. and in Mat. xxv. 46.

And that 3^{dly}, By *Fire*, Schliſting. comm. in Hebr. x. 27. apud Crellium, in Bibl. Fratr. Polon. T. 1. ſee his Paraphr. on the ſame verſ. ibid.

allow

allow of little or no danger for those that do ill. They suppose that the worst that can happen to them, if they should chance to be overtaken in their sins, is but to lose their Portion in the Joys of Heaven, and be for ever annihilated; the only danger that, if you will believe them, attends the greatest Sinners in the other World.

But yet still, methinks, since they confess that there is such a place as Heaven, and that there shall be an enjoyment of Honour and Glory there to all Eternity, for those who at that day shall be found worthy of it; even this should be enough to make them think it worth their while to endeavour to procure themselves a share in so much happiness. And however they suppose that the Everlasting Punishment which the Holy Scriptures threaten sinners with, shall be only an Eternal Annihilation; yet since 'tis plain that the same Scriptures speak very dreadful things of it; and it cannot be denied, but

that the greatest part of Christians have and do believe that the wicked shall not cease to be, but on the contrary, for ever continue in

Mat. xiii. 42. xxii. 13.
xxv. 41, 46. Mar. ix. 43, &c.
compared with Rev. xiv.
10. xx. 10. Rom. ii. 5, 6, 8, 9.
Add, for the reality of
the pains, Mat. xi. 24. xxiii.
15. Luke xii. 47, &c.

O 4

a state

a state of *Misery*, which neither any tongue can express, nor any thought conceive; and 'tis certain there are many passages in the Sacred Writ, that seem very much to favour this apprehension, indeed that cannot without violence be detorted to any other signification; It must certainly be the wisest course, not to be too secure in their own *sense*, but whether they believe the *Torments* of the *Damn'd* to be *Eternal* or no, yet certainly to live so as if they made not the least doubt of it.

2. But secondly: Another sort of men there are, who by their mistaken Notions of Christianity, have very much contributed to lessen their Opinion concerning the *necessity of Repentance*, that I do not say have utterly corrupted the very nature and practice of it, I mean the *Casuists* and *Confessors* of the *Church of Rome*.

It is a Point commonly *disputed* among these men, what the precise time is, in which men are bound by the Law of God to *Repent*? There have been some of them indeed so severe, as to think that a man ought to repent on all the greater || *Festivals* of the Church. Others

Others || think that 'tis enough if a man do it against *Easter* : But the common Opinion is, that this is only to be understood of the external and ritual *Repentance* of the *Church*, which consists in *Confessing* and *Receiving* the *Holy Sacrament* ; but that for the true, inward *Repentance*, † the precise time in which the sinner is bound by the commandment of God to be contrite for his sins, is the imminent Article of a Natural or Violent Death. Infomuch, that some of them doubt not to say, That even for a man to resolve to defer his *Repentance*, and refuse to *Repent* for a certain time, is but a * *Venial Sin* ; nay, and others think, ∴ no sin at all.

|| Soto and others. See Escobar sum. Theol. Exam. iv. de Pœnit. c. vii. Sect. 2.

† Reginald. praxis fori pœnit. l.v. c. 2. Sect. 4. n. 23. Vafquez. in 3. qu. 86. art. 2. dub. 6. See below. * Soto in iv. Sent. dist. 17. qu. 2. art. 2. concl. 2.

∴ Cod. de Pœnit. tract. 1. qu. 6. Escobar sum. Theol. Tract. vii. cap. 7. pag. 780. Lugd. 1659. & pag. 770. ad Quæst. Quando nam quis actum contritionis teneatur elicere. R. Non statim ac peccat ; sed statò tempore, nempe in mortis articulo, & in vita aliquoties si solum jus naturale spectetur, & probabile est quinto quoque Anno.

And these men, to be sure, in express terms take away the necessity of *present Repentance* ; But this is not yet all ; for when they do come to the time that they think it necessary to put it in *practice*, even then they find out so many

ny other Artifices to elude the sincere performance of it, that they who do all which they require of them, yet do not in effect truly *Repent*.

What else can we make of the allow'd *practise* of that *Church*, upon *Confession* of *Sins*, and an *imperfect Contrition* for them; to admit them to *Absolution*; and so in effect make the whole of this *Duty* to amount to no more than a *little sorrow* for sin, and a *resolution* to *forsake* it; though at the same time they are so far from doing it, that it may be they do not themselves believe that ever they shall make good such their *Resolution*? And that too, though they have neither any *love* of *God* in their hearts, nor otherwise *hate* their *sins*, than they are afraid of being damn'd for them.

See Esco-
bar. summ.
mor. The-
ol. Tract.
viii. cap. 7.
n. 92, 93.
pag. 781.

Morinus
de poenit.
tent. l. viii.
cap. 4.
n. 15.
Lugo de
Pœnit.

disp. v. sect. 9. n. 130, &c.

I need not say how many other *De-
vices* these Men have found out, to free
themselves from the trouble of a *true
Repentance*. By *Pardons* and *Indulgences*;
by *Masses* and *Prayers for the dead*; by
Consecrated Garments, and *Priviledg'd Fra-
ternities*: and the End of all which, is
what

what I am now complaining of, to make men careless and negligent in the discharge of that Piety that God requires of them ; and of that *Repentance* which alone can obtain an effectual forgiveness of their Sins.

But these are not yet all, who by their mistaken *Notions* of some of the *Doctrines* of *Christianity*, have been but too much encouraged to neglect the *practice* of a *Christian life* : Others there are,

3dly, And those of a more near concern to us than either of the foregoing, whose *Principles* seem, without great care, but too naturally to tend to the same neglect. Such are, The Great Assertors of Salvation by *Faith alone* without *Works* ; of God's *Eternal Predestination*, and in consequence thereof Mens *Absolute Election or Reprobation* ; Of the *slavery* of the *Will*, and its incapacity to do any thing as to the business of our *Future state* without that *special Grace* of *God*, which if men have, then they must needs do *Well*; and without it, cannot but do *Ill*; and which *God* does not afford *indifferently* to *All* those to whom the *Gospel* is *preach'd*, but to such only as he intends thereby to bring
to

to *Faith* and *Repentance* first, and then to *Salvation*. Now not to dispute with any one the *Truth* of all these *Points*, when *wisely* and *soberly* stated according to the Authority of the *Holy Scripture*; that which I say, is this, That all these, and the like *Principles*, are apt to mislead *Ignorant* and *Wicked Men*, who are not very well instructed in the true notion and understanding of them, to a *neglect* of their *duty*; as if the whole work of their *Justification* were either so secure and settled on the one hand, or else so desperate and impossible on the other, that there was no need of their own *Care* or *Concern* about it; nor any reason for them to trouble themselves about that, which if they shall ever attain, no negligence of their own can do them any hurt; if they must not, no care or endeavour can do them good.

4. I shall add but yet one thing more, which, I fear, has led many into a *neglect* of *Repentance*; and that is, An unwarrantable presumption upon God's *Mercy*; either that he will afford them time to *repent* at the *last*, though they go on for the present in their *Sins*; or, if he does not, will at least make
a very

a very favourable allowance for their *Impenitence*.

This is an *Opinion* which Wicked Men do as greedily catch at, as their deplorable State renders them greatly in need of it. And indeed far be it from me to lessen any reasonable Hopes of God's Favour to Sinners, who my self stand so much in need of it. No doubt, there is *Mercy with God that he may be feared*. Psal. cxxx.
 Many are the ways, and Gracious and 4. Excellent the Methods whereby He calls and invites us to *Repentance*. And if we accept the Invitation, we need not question but that we shall most certainly receive the pardon of our Sins through the *Blood of Christ*. But then this is not the Question, Whether God will not make very great allowances for our *Infirmities*, and forgive us, though we have never so long and grievously sinn'd against Him, if we *repent* at the last. But whether, if we neglect the Opportunities which he affords us of *repenting*; if with *Felix* in the *Text*, we still put off our *Consciences* to a more convenient *season*, and at last die in our sins without ever *repenting* of them, God will not then turn his Mercy into Judgment; and whether we ought not therefore to
 make

make all the haste we can to *repent*, lest perhaps he should do so. But,

3dly, A third *cause* of mens *delaying* their *Repentance* is; That though they do believe it necessary for them to *repent* some time or other, yet they think this may be done *hereafter* as well as *now*.

And this is what most of us are but too apt to flatter our selves withall. *Repentance* is, God knows, a melancholly *duty*: It calls us to another kind of life than that we have been used to, or indeed for the most part do at all desire to be acquainted with. He that will put it in practise, must expect to meet with no small difficulties in the setting out; and few there are who have Constancy enough to go through them all; and therefore no wonder if we find the generality of Men so little care to set about a work that is so hard and discouraging to the most resolute Undertakers of it. Now 'tis this makes them willing to meet these troubles as late as ever they can: When their years run deep, and their Lusts fail them, and they can no longer pursue the Pleasures of this World,

World, then they suppose it will be time enough to think of the other. And they see no reason, why they may not hope as well to be accepted then, as others who in like manner have come in at the *Eleventh hour*, Mat. xx. 6, and yet received as great a reward, as those *that had born the heat and burden of the day*. — 12.

But this is indeed as unreasonable a ground for any one to *delay* his *Repentance*, as either of the foregoing. For,

1st, They cannot endure to set about their *duty* immediately, because of the trouble and difficulty which they apprehend in it. I will not now enquire how they are sure it is so troublesome and difficult a thing to fulfil their duty, as they suppose it to be, seeing they have never yet tried it, to be convinced by their own Experience that it is so. This only I would know; Will it become ever the more easie for their deferring of it? Nay, but on the contrary, I shall hereafter shew, that the longer it is deferr'd, the harder it will prove to us. And were it not so, yet since 'tis necessary some time or other to *Re-*
pent,

pent, and so *Dangerous* to die ere we have done it; Certainly the more *difficult* a thing it is, the sooner we ought to set about it, whilst we may have yet the time, by the *Grace* of God, to accomplish it. And then,

2dly, For that poor presumption; That others have done this, and yet were saved at the last, and why therefore may not we be so too? Though I will not say that none who have put off the business of their *Repentance* to the last, have ever gone to Heaven; yet I must needs say, I fear that but few have done so. I do not remember in all the *Holy Scripture* more than *One Instance* of the Salvation of a *dying Penitent*, and that so extraordinary in all its Circumstances, that it cannot with any reason be made a Precedent by us for the likes *Hopes*; I mean that of the *Thief upon the Cross*; And even of Him too it does not appear that ever he *deferr'd* his *Repentance*, or put it off purposely to that, as the most *convenient Season*. And for those who came in at the *Eleventh hour*, and yet were received; I shall only say thus much, That they came in as soon as they were called,

called, and did not refuse to go into the *Vineyard* at the *Third hour*, because they thought it was too soon, and their Laziness prompted them to decline their work, till the *Heat and Burden of the day* was past.

In short, He that *delays* his *Repentance* upon this prospect, that he may do it hereafter as well as now, ought first to have very well consider'd these two things. *1st*, Is he sure that he shall live to that time which he so warily allots to this great work? For if he be not, then I am sure he lives in danger of *Eternal damnation* all the while he neglects to enter on a state of Piety and Religion: and chuses rather to hazard his *Everlasting Happiness*, than to put himself upon a Work that yet must be done, or he shall remain for ever miserable. *2dly*, Is he certain, that though he should live to that time, yet that then God will give him *Grace* to *repent*? That his *Aversion* to his duty shall not be greater then, than it is now; and his *Unwillingness* encrease the more, the older he grows in his Sins and Impenitence?

P

What

What the satisfaction of Mens Lusts may be, I cannot tell : but certainly, if they have any thoughts at all of their *Future state*, and do indeed believe a *Judgment to come*, such dangers as these cannot chuse but amaze them ; and their disquiets at the Apprehension, that by thus deferring their *Repentance* they may possibly lose their Souls for ever, infinitely outweigh whatever *Pleasures* they can in the mean time propose to themselves, by going on a little longer in their Wickedness.

But I must not insist upon these things ; and therefore

4thly, And to conclude this Point : The last cause that moves many to *delay* their *Repentance*, is, that tho' they are convinced both of the *Necessity* of *repenting* some time or other, and that it is highly reasonable for them to set presently about it, yet when all is done, their *Lusts* are too *strong* for them, and they cannot so soon resolve to part with their Sins, and enter on a Course of Piety and Religion.

There

There is something in the *Nature* of *Sin* so fatally bewitching to us, that if once we suffer our selves to be overcome with the *Habit* of it, 'tis after that, one of the hardest things in the World to recover our liberty, and prevent our selves from being altogether hardned by the deceitfulness of it. *He that committeth sin*, says our Saviour Christ, *is the servant of sin*. Whether it be that the force and power of an Evil Course gains insensibly upon us, till at last we have no more strength remaining to overcome it; Or, Whether it be that the longer we continue in Sin, the more *God's Grace* is withdrawn, and the less assistance we have of the *Holy Spirit* to extricate our selves out of it. But this is plain, that even the best Men find it a hard matter, with all their Industry, to keep themselves from its *dominion*; and to fulfil their Resolutions, though never so soon taken up, of discharging their duty, and living as becomes the Disciples of Christ.

I do not in the least question, but that we are all of us sufficiently convinced of the reasonableness of what I have now been enforcing, of *setting immediately about our duty*: and, I believe, there are

The Sixth Sermon.

but few, if any among us, who, if they do not at this time, yet have at least some time or other resolved to do so. But I fear it would be a melancholly reflection to most of us, to think how little we have fulfilled these *Resolutions* hitherto, and may give us some cause to fear whether we may not be but too likely still to continue in the same careless and impenitent state for the time to come.

The truth is, in such a degenerate Age as this, wherein *Vice* is become almost reputable; and to be *religious*, esteem'd pedantry and preciseness: When the Evil *Customs* of *Men* have prevailed so far above the *Commandments* of *God*, that a Man must yield to be a little Wicked, unless he will run counter to the general practice of the World; and not a little negligent of his duty, to maintain the Company and Conversation of the Times; 'tis not an easie thing for a Man to break through all these difficulties, and resolve to *save his Soul* whatever censures or troubles he encounters for the so doing. And therefore, though we all of us know well enough what we ought to do, and cannot but be sometimes apprehensive of the dangers we
run

run by our not doing of it, yet alas! we still go on in the neglect of our duty: Ever thinking and resolving to amend, but never able effectually to set about it.

And thus have I given you such a *general* prospect as the time would permit, of those *Causes* that so much indispose Men to a present *Repentance*: I go on to the other thing I proposed in order to the Cure of it.

Illy, To shew the *Danger* of deferring the performance of it.

For, if such a delay as this, be not only very *unreasonable* in it self, but shall be also very *fatal* in its Consequence; if there be really nothing in all those pretences that usually keep men from a present discharge of their duty, and an infinite Hazard to be run by it; Sure then we ought to begin immediately to do that which can neither be too soon begun, nor at all delay'd without a very great danger: Which we must some time or other do, and which will still grow more difficult and uneasy to us, the longer it is that we put off the doing of it.

P 3

And,

And, *1st*, Let me ask him that thus neglects his *Repentance*, and thinks it will be time enough to set about it hereafter, when the heat of his Youth is past, and he begins to come to a greater strength of *Reason* and *Discretion*, to govern himself, and to bring his Passions into subjection; It may be gives it yet a longer *delay*, and reserves the business of *Religion* for the *Close* of his Life, and an immediate preparatory to the hour of his Death: Is he sure that he shall ever arrive to that time which he thus warily sets out for this great Work? I need not tell you how uncertain our lives are; What *Diseases*, what *Accidents* lay siege against us every Moment? And if notwithstanding all this, some do live to a *good Old Age*; yet how many Thousands there are that fall in the strength and vigor of their years? And we cannot say but that this may be our Condition, as we are sure it has been the Condition of many Others, who, it may be, as much flatter'd themselves with these Projects, as We do now, and are therefore in vain lamenting their mad Security in the Concern of their Salvation.

But

But this I must needs say, a greater provocation there cannot be given to *God Almighty* to cut us off in the midst of our years, and deprive us of that opportunity we so presumptuously set out for to *repent* in, after a long life spent in Sin and Impenitence, than thus to go on in our wickedness, and designedly to live in a *disobedience* to his *Commands*, till we are no longer like to continue in this World.

2. But however, 2dly, Let us allow of this, that we had by some means or other an Assurance of our lives, and could be certain we should arrive to that Time we thus lay out for the business of *Religion*. Yet how are we sure that we shall not then be altogether as unwilling, and much more unable to *repent*, than we are now?

1st, If we consider our selves only upon the Common *principles* of *Nature*, without reflecting upon the *Grace* of *God*, without which yet we can do nothing as to the Business of our *Duty*; Even these will tell us, That the more inveterate any *Habit* is, the more difficult it is to leave it, and the greater

pains it will cost a Man to overcome it. And he who finds it so hard a Matter to conquer his *Lusts* now, what will he do hereafter, when the Indulgence of many years more shall have rooted them in his very Soul, and made his *sins* become even *natural* to him?

2dly, But then, *secondly* : If we examine this matter according to the *Principles* of *Christianity*, these will shew a yet greater improbability of our *repenting* hereafter, than at the present. It being not to be doubted, but that as upon the Use of *God's Grace*, He bestows a more liberal portion of it; so by *refusing* and *resisting* the *Motions* of the *Holy Spirit*, God withdraws his hand, and lessens his *Grace*, and it may be at last totally deprives Men of it.

The truth is, I cannot but think that such Persons as these, who not only *continue* in the Commissions of *sin*, but project and contrive for the *continuing* in it; and therefore put off the Time of their *Repentance* as a work that may be well enough done hereafter, do in effect *despise the Holy Spirit*.

Spirit of God, and trample under foot that *Grace* which should have led them to *Repentance*. And it must certainly be a most daring Presumption in any Sinner, to think, that notwithstanding such a provocation, God will yet attend his leisure, and continue to afford him the Assistance of his *Grace* for his Salvation at the last, though he has so often, wilfully, and designedly rejected all the Offers of it.

I am sufficiently persuaded; that there is none of us, whom *God* does not call most truly and sincerely to *Salvation*; and by consequence, that there is none of us, to whom he has not offer'd such a measure of his *Grace*, as might enable him to fulfil his *Duty*, in order thereunto, and perfect his *Repentance*. But I must confess, I cannot without some concern think, what an unworthy use we have the most of us made of it, and how justly we have deserved, that God should at last leave us to our selves, and no longer in vain attend our Amendment.

And

The Sixth Sermon.

And O! that we would therefore be persuaded seriously to reflect upon all these things, and no longer go on to expose our *immortal souls* to such desperate hazards, as 'tis plain from all these Considerations we do, every day that we neglect to provide for *Eternity*! Be it enough that we are not already made the fatal Monuments of Abused Mercy: That we are yet on this side *Hell*, and may if we please, by our *speedy Repentance*, still prevent those Judgments which our former *Impenitence* has but too justly deserved.

Jer. xiii. 16. Let us begin in this our day, to see and to pursue the things that make for our peace, before they be hid from our eyes.

Heb iii. 13. Let us exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Heb iv. 1. Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.

Let us give glory to God, before darkness come, and our feet stumble upon the dark mountains.

I con-

The Sixth Sermon.

219

I conclude all with the words of the
Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. LV. Vers. 6, 7.

*Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near.*

*Let the wicked forsake his way, and
the unrighteous man his thoughts;
and let him return unto the Lord,
and he will have mercy upon him,
and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

OF

I conclude all with the words of
 Prophet Isaiah, Chap. LV. Verse 6.

Seek the Lord while he may be found.

and come into his light.

For the wicked path is his way, and

the upright way is his thought.

and let him return unto the Lord.

and he will have mercy upon him.

and says our God, for he will not

forget his people.

OF THE
DANGER

OF
Mens Delaying their Repentance.

A
SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT
WHITE-HALL.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

Felix trembled; and answer'd,
Go thy way for this time, when I
have a convenient season, I will
call for thee.

AMONG all the Aggravations of sin,
there is none greater, than to
continue it not only against the checks
of

The Seventh Sermon.

of *Conscience*, and the motions of God's *Holy Spirit* to the contrary, but after many admonitions in vain sent us by his merciful *Providence* to bring us to *Repentance*. There are, I believe, but few, if any, in the World, so lost to all the Hopes of *Heaven* and *Eternity*, who have not some time or other, been put in mind of their *Duty*, and invited by God's *Grace*, to *Pardon* and *Salvation*. And if notwithstanding all this, men will nevertheless continue still incorrigible, and harden themselves against all the means that can be made use of to reclaim them, we ought not to wonder, if they are at last given up to the *Dominion* of *Sin*, and reserved as monuments of the *just Judgment* of God, at the day of his glorious appearing.

I will not now enter on any Enquiry what the cause should be, why we who are all of us sufficiently convinced of the necessity of *Repenting*, and the deplorable State in which we must expect to be, if we do not some time or other effectually set about it; should yet still for the most part be so very unwilling to *Repent*.

But

But because, this is one of the most fatal delusions men are apt to cheat themselves withall, that with *Felix* here in my *Text*, they put off this business to a *more convenient Season*, and by their unseasonable *Procrastinations* in an *Affair* that of all others ought the least to be defer'd, too often die without ever performing it at all; I will make it my endeavour so to lay before you the *Danger* of such a *Delay*, as if it shall please God to convince you not so much of the *Necessity* of *Repenting* some time or other, which I take it for granted without my speaking you are all of you already resolved to do, as of the great concern we have immediately to set about it; and do that *presently* which we must some time or other do, and can never do so Well as now.

And this I shall make appear from these *two* Considerations;

Ist, Of the great *Danger* we run by *delaying* our *Repentance*.

Ndly, Of the *Comfort* and *Satisfaction* that will arise to us, from the *Conscience* of having duly
Per-

The Seventh Sermon.

Perform'd it as we ought to do.

I begin with the former of these *Considerations*,

1st, Of the great *Danger* we run by *delaying* our *Repentance*.

Now that in one Word is this ; That whilst we go on continually to put off our *Duty* and the business of *Repentance* to a more *convenient Season* ; and like *Felix* in the *Text* think it still too soon to set presently about it ; we run the hazard of never doing it at all, and like *Felix*, too often die in our *Sins* and our *Impenitence*. So that whatsoever danger there is of dying without ever *Repenting*, the same is the *danger* which we run by *delaying* our *Repentance*. And this I shall make appear,

1st, From the great *Shortness* and *Uncertainty* of our present State.

2dly, From the *Nature* and *Difficulty* of *Repentance*. And,

3dly, From

The Seventh Sermon.

225

3dly, From the *Method* of God's proceeding in the *Dispensation* of his *Grace*, as set forth to us in the *Holy Scripture*.

And 1st,

That the *Shortness* and *Uncertainty* of our *Present State*, ought to convince us how great a *danger* we run by *Delaying* our *Repentance*.

For Proof whereof I shall not think it necessary to entertain you with any *Common-place-Argument* of the *Infirmities* of our *Nature*, and the many *Casualties* to which our *Lives* here are perpetually exposed, and against which we can never say we are secure for the next moment. How many *Persons* have been struck with *Sudden Death*? What accidents have befallen others to render them wholly unfit for their *Duty*; so that though they have had a longer warning of their *Approaching End*, yet either by the *Intollerable Sharpness* of their *Pain*, or its influence upon their understanding *Faculties*, so as many times to deprive them
Q of

The Seventh Sermon.

of all the use of their *Reason*, and render them utterly incapable, either to reflect upon their *lives*, or to repent them of their *Sins*, have been so far indisposed to all the Offices of *Religion*, that their longer respite has proved of no more advantage to them, than if they had not had the least notice of their approaching End. These are things which every Discourse of *Mortality* for the most part abounds with; and a daily *Experience* renders any long insisting upon them, needless to us.

Psal. cxi.
7.

We live in the midst of the *Monuments of Death*. *Thousands fall every day besides us, and ten thousands at our right hand*: And it is only of the Mercy of God that we are yet *alive*, to consider these things, and to prepare to *die*. And sure then it cannot but be a very great *danger*, as it is certainly a very great *presumption* in any Man to neglect this, and defer his *Repentance* to such a Time as he can never be sure he shall live to see.

And

And this is an *Argument* which every man's own reason will at the first view offer to him to convince him of the *danger* of *procrastinating* his *Repentance*: And such as ought never the less to be consider'd, because it lies so obvious to our understandings, as to be the common *Topick* of every one in the managing of this *Exhortation*. But yet, since such is the *Infirmities* of our Nature, that we are apt to overlook many times what is the nearest to us; and common *Arguments*, like other *ordinary things*, are not usually so much regarded, as otherwise the true weight and value of them would deserve they should be: I will endeavour to improve this useful *Reflection*, by desiring these two things may be farther considered in it, and which perhaps are not so commonly attended to.

1st, Whether he who *delays* his *Repentance* now, out of a prospect that he shall hereafter have time enough to enter upon the practise of it; does not, besides the *danger* which arises from the *common uncertainty* of *life*,

Q²

and

and the *miserics* and *casualties* that ordinarily accompany it, to prevent his *Repenting* at all, expose himself moreover by this very thing to the particular hazard of the *Judgment* of God, to cut him off in the midst of his Sins. What such Persons as these may think of their putting off their *Repentance* to some future season, I cannot tell; But I must confess, when I consider the full import of it, I cannot but look upon this as one of the most provoking Crimes in the World; Nor do I think it possible for any man to add a higher Aggravation to his Sins, than being *admonish'd* of his *danger*, and so far convinced of the *necessity* of *Repenting*, as to resolve some time or other to enter upon it; nevertheless still to go on in his Evil way, and desperately resolve not to begin to be religious, till things are come to the very last Extremity, and it is absolutely necessary for the *saving* of his Soul. For,

1st, He who neglects to *repent* at the *present*, out of a presumption that he shall *hereafter* have Time enough to do it,

it, when *Age* and *Infirmities* are crept upon him, and he is no longer in a Condition to pursue the pleasures of his Sins; What does he but in effect declare, that the best of his Time is fit to be consecrated to the service of his Sins, and the refuse only to be reserved for *God*, which he knows not well otherwise how to dispose of?

I need not say how reproachful a thing this must be to *Religion*, to esteem it a Work fit only for that part of our lives in which we are not good for any thing besides. But sure I am, that Man must have a very mean Notion of *God Almighty*, who can think him of so *Easie* a Temper, and so indulgent to *Sinners*, as to be willing to receive them at any rate; and after all the *Indignity* and *Scorn* with which they have treated Him all their life-long, to be glad to take them upon their own Terms, and rather than go without them, to accept even of this *slight* and *seeming submission* from them.

It must be confess'd indeed, that great is the *mercy* and *long-suffering* of
Q 3
God,

Psal. cxxx.

4.

God, beyond any thing we are able to exprefs or to conceive. But then *there is mercy with him*, that he may be served and feared, not affronted and abused by us. *His Goodness leads to Repentance*, but gives no encouragement to our *Impenitence*. And he who thinks that God will accept the *Refuse* of his *Time*, after a long life spent in the service of *sin*; and the business of *Religion* put off on purpose to this *last period*, as supposing it would then be soon enough to provide for *Eternity*; will, I fear, instead of an Acceptance, meet with the same reproof those of old in the like case did, who kept the best of their Flocks, and of their Herds for themselves, and offered to him the *Blind*, and the *Lame*, and the Sick for sacrifice; Mal. i. 10. 14. *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an Offering at your hands. Cursed be the deceiver that bath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: For I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.*

Mal. i. 8, 10

---14.

But

But 2dly. He who thus *delays* his *Repentance*, does not only provoke *God* by *continuing* at the *present* in *sin*, and that too out of an unwarrantable presumption that he shall be accepted at the last, though in the mean time he continues *Impenitent*; but 'tis plain, has no true *Honour* for *God* at all; nor thinks of *Repenting* even then, because he *loves God*, and desires to please him, but merely because he is afraid he shall otherwise be damn'd, and lose his *Soul* to all *Eternity*. For else, had such a one any *real sense* of *Religion*, or did he even then intend in good earnest to set about the *practice* of it, it is not to be imagined wherefore it is that he at present neglects the performance of it. Nor can any other account be given why he does not begin the next moment to be *religious*, but only this, that he does not truly *love God*, nor *desire* to serve him, nor by his good will would ever think of doing of it.

Now this will yet more aggravate the heinousness of such a *delay*, and betray a desperate contempt of the *Di-*

Q 4

vine

The Seventh Sermon.

vine Goodness and Wisdom : As if God either were not able to discover our *Hypocrisie*, and distinguish between a real *Penitent*, and a *pretending* Votary ; or would otherwise so far connive at it, as to accept of a shadow of *Repentance*, a *form of Godliness* reserved on purpose for the last business of our lives, and then too put on only because it could no longer be deferr'd, not out of any *love to God or Religion*, but merely for fear of his *Eternal Vengeance*.

And when such is the desperate *Provocation* which every *Sinner* by *delaying* his *Repentance*, adds to all the rest of his *Impieties* ; I cannot but think, we ought seriously to consider, before we venture upon such a *Procrastination* ; or rather, to speak more properly, to keep our selves from *deferring* our *Repentance* at all ; not only how very little security we have of our lives, upon the account of the general uncertainty of our condition in this world ; But whether this very thing of *putting off the business of Religion to such a season*, may not be a particular means to call down some *speedy Judgment* upon us,

us, so that we shall never come to that *time* we designed for this work. But.

2dly. Should nothing of this happen unto us, yet still it cannot but be very *dangerous* to *defer* our *Repenting*, though never so little, seeing such is the difficulty of performing it, that he who has the longest life, will find it scarce enough to discharge it as he ought to do. And he that puts it off as a work that may be done well enough hereafter, in his declining years, perhaps in his last sickness; may possibly do somewhat which he may call *Repenting*, but which 'tis very great odds shall have little in it, more than the *Name* and *Appearance* of it.

And this brings me to the *Second General Argument* I proposed, to shew the danger of *Deferring* our *Duty*. viz.

Illy, From the *Nature* and *Difficulty* of *Repentance*.

This is an Argument which I the rather chuse to insist upon on this
occa-

occasion, because I am apt to believe 'tis the mistake of the true *Nature* of *Repentance* that chiefly encourages so many to a delay of it. For sure were men heartily persuaded, that 'tis so great a thing to *Repent* as indeed it is; that it requires so much Labour and Pains to accomplish it, and cannot presently be known even by our own selves whether it be perform'd as it ought or no; insomuch that should we allow him who has put off his Duty for the present, to discharge it truly at the last, yet 'twill be impossible for him till he comes to the *Judgment-Seat of Christ*, to be sure that he has done so; they would never venture to defer it to such a time, in which 'tis next to a Miracle for a man not to miscarry in it.

I Pet. iii.
11.

Now *Repentance*, if taken in that proper Notion which the *Holy Scriptures* give us of it, is a *change of Mind*, in the words of St. Peter, an *eschewing of Evil, and a doing Good*. It consists not in a bare sorrow for Sin, or a *Desire* and *Resolution* to live better for the time to come, but in a *real Conversion*. By consequence, to fulfil

fil it as we ought to do, we must not only be *sorry* for our *sins*, and *desire* and *resolve* to amend, but we must truly and heartily endeavour so to do. 'Tis a *change of life*, in which the true performance of this *Duty consists*; and whatsoever comes short of this, when we have opportunity so to do, is not a sincere *Repentance*, nor will ever be accepted of by God as such.

And when such is the nature of this *Duty*, I shall not need to say, either how difficult it is to discharge it, or how much *Time* as well as *Labour* it will cost us to accomplish it. It is not a little while that will suffice to overcome those vicious habits, which a long practice has rendred almost natural to us; to conquer our passions, and bring our most extravagant lusts into subjection to the rules of Religion. And we may have just reason to fear by the difficulty we find but of beginning this work, how much more pains and trouble it will cost us to bring it to perfection.

Let us add to this, That every *Habit*, and that of Sin above all others, the longer it is continued in, the more
it

it roots it self in our very Natures, and the greater *time* and *pains* it will require to remove it. So that then our Task will increase every day upon our hands; and the longer we *neglect* our *duty*, we shall not only have the less *time* remaining to fulfil it in, but we shall still have the more to do to discharge it as we ought to do.

If therefore we can with any reason suppose, that we shall be able to do all this at the last: If we can indeed securely presume that such a *change* as this is a work fit for our *declining years*: That when our Memory is decay'd, and our Thoughts move slow; When our Reason begins to fail us, and the Infirmities of our Age, and our Sins to surround us; We shall then be in a Condition to look back into all the remote Passages of our Lives pass'd, and to call our selves to an account for all our sins, and raise up our resentments to a true and real Contrition for them; and so to change our very Natures, as from old, Habitual Sinners, to become upon the sudden, *New Creatures*; from the Servants of Sin, the Children of God; let us then, if we please, put
c ff

off our *Repentance* to the *last Act*; and resolve that it will be time enough for us then to begin to *live*, when we are just now about to *die*.

But if we cannot, without the utmost unreasonableness, imagine that we shall then be able to do all this: If such a *change* as I have now mention'd, and as the true *Nature* of *Repentance* does imply, be a work that will require our best strength and labour to accomplish it, and without some extraordinary measure of the *Divine Assistance*, be too much even for that: It must then remain, that tho' we were the Masters of our own time, yet we could not, without a very great danger, put our *Salvation* upon such a Hazard as this, in which if we should allow it possible for a man to attain unto it, yet to be sure that is all, and 'tis a thousand to one but he comes short of it.

There is yet a *third* Consideration which I propos'd, and which will still more shew the *danger* of *delaying* our *Repentance*, viz.

Illdly,

*Ill*dly, From the *Method* by which God usually proceeds in the dispensation of his *Grace*, as it is set out to us in the *Holy Scriptures*.

I have already observed, from the very nature of all *Habits* in general, that the longer any one goes on in an Evil Course, the more unwilling he will be, and the greater difficulty he will find it to get out of it. But in the *Habit* of *Sin*, especially every little delay, adds a new strength to our Passions; and those Lusts which at first might more easily have been overcome, being suffer'd by a longer continuance to insinuate themselves into our very *Natures*, get the mastery of us, so that we have neither *desire* nor *ability* to rid our selves of them.

No one becomes extremely wicked upon a sudden. When first Men begin to enter upon an Evil Course, they find many difficulties arise on every side to reclaim them from it. *Conscience* is vigilant, and for the most part very troublesome too. It remonstrates
to

to them the baseness and unreasonable-
ness of a Vicious course of life, and it is
not without some violence that they
break through the restraints of Shame
and Modesty to pursue it. Sometimes
it sets before them the *obligations* which
their *duty* lays upon them to fulfil it :
How worthy and honourable a thing it
is to live *Virtuously* ; what a Credit and
Respect it gains a man *here*, and what a
glorious *Reward* shall be the consequence
of it hereafter ? Sometimes it calls to
mind the *terrors of the Lord* ; and forces
them whether they will or no to think
of that Time, when *for all these things* Ecclef. xi.
God will bring them to Judgment : and 9.
how they shall then be able to en-
dure an *Eternity of Torments* in that
wretched place, *where the Worm dieth* Mark ix:
not, and where the fire never shall be 44.
quenched.

Now all these, and many other hin-
drances of the like kind, which the Sin-
ner meets with in the first beginnings
of his Evil Course, are not only so many
Barriers which it has pleased God to set
in our way to keep us from ruine, but
so many helps too to assist us, if we
should at any time be enticed to do
wickedly,

The Seventh Sermon.

wickedly, to recover our selves again out of it. But by a longer *Continuance* in *Sin*, all these are overcome; and we are not only thereby more deeply engaged in the ways of wickedness; but having lost all these Assistances, our retreat is also rendred infinitely more difficult, than whilst we lay under the restraints of *Shame*, and *Fear*, and *Conscience*, to reclaim us.

But this is not yet all: for by *continuing* in *Sin*, and *putting off* the time of our *Repentance*, we do not only diminish our own *Natural strength*, and thereby render our selves still less able to encounter with it; but what is yet more to be consider'd, we deprive our selves of the Assistance of God's *Grace* too, without which it will be impossible for us ever to overcome it.

It is laid down by *Isaiah* as the reason why God forsook his ancient People the *Jews*, Chap. lxiii. vers. 10. That *they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore was he turn'd to be their Enemy, and He fought against them.* And our Blessed Saviour in his Gospel every-where proceeds upon this measure in the dispensations of his *Grace*; that * to Him who

* Mat. xiii.

12.

Mark iv.

25.

Luke viii.

18.

---xix. 26,

Ec.

who has, i. e. who makes use of, and improves what God has already bestow'd upon him, *shall be given*, and he shall have more abundantly: But *from him that has not*, i. e. that does not make use of, and improve what he has, even *that which he once had, shall be taken away*. And however it may sometimes please God in an extraordinary manner to raise up Sinners at the last, and though they continue long in their Wickedness, yet nevertheless still continue his *Divine Assistance* to them, to bring them to *Repentance*: yet cannot this be any Ground for any one to rely upon in this matter, seeing it is plain both from the *Authority of Holy Scripture*, and the *Common Experience of Mankind*, that in the ordinary Methods of *God's Providence*, his *Grace* is withdrawn in proportion to Men's neglect of it, till at last they are utterly deprived of it, and *given up to be led Captive by the Devil at his Will*. 2 Tim. ii. 26.

Hence it is that we sometimes read in *Holy Scripture* of Persons deliver'd up to a *Hardness and Impenitence of heart*. Not that I think God ordains any man to destruction, or denies him such a measure

R

fure

Matt. xiii.
14.
Mark vi.
52.
John xii.
40.
Hebr. iii.
13.
Rom. ii. 5.

sure of his *Grace* as may be sufficient to preserve him from it; But when Men neglect his Offer, and *despise* and *grieve* his *Holy Spirit*; and go on in their *Sins*, notwithstanding all the *methods* of his *Providence* to bring them to *repentance*; When the *measure* of their *Iniquities* is now fill'd up, and they are become ripe for *Vengeance*; then God is pleas'd sometimes to *withdraw* his *Grace* from them, and seal them up unto *destruction*: And tho he may sometimes permit them, for other *ends* of his *Providence*, to continue still in this World, yet he no longer continues the Power and Assistance of his *Holy Spirit* to them, to bring them to *repentance*.

Exod. vii.

14.

viii. 19, 32.

This I take to have been the Case of *Pharaoh* after the *Sixth Judgment*. Till then, the Scripture tells us, that *He hardned his Heart*, or that *His Heart was hardned*: But when his own *Magicians* confess'd that the *finger of God* plainly shew'd it self in the *Miracles of Moses*, and yet he still continued obstinate; then *God* declares that *He hardned him*: Exod. ix. 12. and caused him to stand, i. e. kept him alive when he had deserved to be punish'd with a quick

quick destruction ; for this very end,
that he might shew in him his power ;
Exod. ix. 16.

Many are the Declarations of the
Holy Scripture that confirm this to us.
If we look into the state of the *Old*
World before the *Flood* ; God himself
declares, *Gen. vi. 3. That his Spirit should*
not always strive with Man : Yet a hun-
dred and twenty years, and if they
repented not in that time, then He
would bring an utter Destruction up-
on them.

And in the same manner we find
Holy David speaking in the person of
God concerning the *Rebellious Israe-*
lites : and which I the rather remark,
because Saint Paul applies it, *Hebr. iii.*
12. to the very purpose of what I am
now speaking : That because they hard-
ned their hearts, and tempted and grie-
ved God forty years, therefore he at last
swore to them in his wrath, that they
should not enter into his rest. And the
application which the *Apostle* makes,
is this plain Conclusion ; Take heed, *Hebr. iii.*
Brethren, lest there be in any of you ^{11.}
an evil heart of unbelief, in departing
from the living God : But exhort one ano- — 12.

The Seventh Sermon.

ther daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of Sin.

And lastly, to mention no more, The same is the Declaration which Solomon makes in the Name of God, concerning the Destruction of hardned and impenitent Sinners, *Prov. i.* where having first set forth the Grace of God ready to assist them, if they would repent : verses 22, 23. *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity ? And ye scorers delight in their scorning, and fools bate knowledge ? Turn you at my reproof : Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you :* He afterwards declares the just indignation of God against them, if they should still continue obstinate and impenitent ; verses 24, 25, 26. *Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would have none of my Reproof : I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. And again, Verses 28 ; 29, 30. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall*

shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord : They would none of my Counsel ; they despised all my Reproof : Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

It were an easie matter to multiply Passages to the same purpose out of every part of the *Holy Scripture*. But I have said enough already to shew the danger of *delaying* our *Repentance*, from the apprehension of over-passing the time of it; and to warrant that great Conclusion, which I think is generally received by *most Christians*; viz. That there is to every *wicked man*, a certain *Time*, when the *measure* of his *Iniquities* being accomplish'd, there shall be no more any *space* for *repentance*, nor any farther assistance given them by *God*, to bring them to it.

Now if this be so, then would I only desire, that these three things might seriously be consider'd by every one of us.

1st, Whether he, who being invited by the *Grace* of *God*, and the *Motions* of

R 3

his

Ephes. iv.
30.

his *Holy Spirit*; by the checks of *Conscience* within, and the importunate calls of the *Ministers* of the *Gospel* without, to *Repentance*, nevertheless neglects all these *Admonitions*, and with *Felix* still puts off the practice of this duty to some more convenient season; does not thereby grieve the *Holy Spirit* of *God*, and despise his *Grace*, and affront his *Goodness*, who thus graciously offers and continues to him the means and opportunities of *Salvation*?

2dly, Whether by so doing, he does not provoke *God* in as high a manner as can well be imagined, no longer to continue his *Grace* to him, nor to expose his *Mercy* to contempt, by suffering his *Holy Spirit* still to strive with such obstinate Offenders? And then by consequence,

3dly, and lastly; Whether every such Person may not have just cause to apprehend, that by delaying his *Repentance*, and putting off the business of Religion to a still future opportunity, he shall at last provoke *God* to withdraw his *Grace* from him? And seeing when he had the
oppor-

opportunity given him, and was invited to *repent*, he despised the offer, and neglected so to do, *God* may not hereafter deliver him up to a *hardned* and *impenitent heart*; and take away that *Grace* from him, which he has so unworthily abused, and thereby deserved to have no longer continu'd to him. Rom. ii. 5;

To conclude : If in that famous *Parable* of the *Talents*, there be any *application* yet remaining to be made of that part of it, in which we find the *Talent* taken from the *unprofitable Servant*, and a terrible Sentence of Everlasting Misery pronounced against him for his neglect : Or, in that other of the *Fig-tree*, which was to be *pruned* and *digg'd*, and then try'd another year; and if still it continued to bring forth no Fruit, then to be *cut down*, and *cast out* of the *Vineyard* : The meaning of both can be no other than this; That he who despising the *Grace* of *God*, and the opportunity of Salvation, continues still in his *Sins*, and improves not those Abilities *God* has given him to the great ends for which they were bestow'd upon him, shall at last by a severe, but most just *judgment* of *God*, be deprived See Matt. xxv. 14. 28, 30.

Luk. xiii. 6.

R 4

prived of them; and have his neglect punish'd with the loss of God's *Grace* here, and in the consequence of it, with an *Eternal Damnation* hereafter.

And this then may suffice to shew, how dangerous it is for a man to put off the business of *Repentance* at the present, out of an unwarrantable presumption that it will be time enough to perform it hereafter. But now if the *Question* be, What a man who has unhappily done this, should do? I reply,

1st, Let him by all means hasten his *Repentance* all he can; and the longer he has deferr'd it already, the more careful and resolute let him be not to put it off one moment longer.

2^{dly}, Let him be so much the more zealous and diligent in his Religious Performances; let his *sorrow* be the more pungent, his *Confessions* the more humble, his *Prayers* the more fervent; but especially his *Resolutions* and his *Endeavours* the more hearty and sincere to break off the course of his *Sins*, the longer he has continued in them: that so by the extraordinary vigor of his present Endeavours, he may make some kind of *reparation* for the slowness he has been hitherto

hitherto guilty of in setting about his duty.

But this is not all : It will, perhaps, be farther enquired ; Whether upon the *Principle* I have now laid down, of the withdrawing *God's Grace* from such as refuse and reject the offers of it, it will not follow, that such persons as these are to be look'd upon as in a *desperate Estate* ; and therefore that it is in vain for them now to think of *repenting* at all ?

But this is a *Question* which every man will best be able to satisfy himself about. That he who puts off his *Repentance* now, upon a presumption that it will be time enough to fulfil it hereafter, may justly fear the *withdrawing* of *God's Grace* from him, I have fully shewn : But that God does absolutely withdraw his *Grace* from every such Person, I do not say ; and whether or no he has *withdrawn* it from any particular Person, he will presently be able to discern by the *state* in which he finds his Soul as to the business of *Religion*.

If his Lusts and his Passions lead him captive at their pleasure ; If he has no Affections or Desires remaining after Piety

Piety in his soul; if he cares not for God nor his duty, nor can yet persuade himself either to think of another world, or to provide for it; These indeed are, though I will not say *certain signs* of a *desperate condition*, yet such as may give us just cause to fear whether he be not come into that *state*, from which there is no *Redemption*, and in which God will no longer give him any *Assistance*, to return into the way of *Righteousness*.

But if, on the contrary, he even now begins to come again to himself, and wishes and desires, if it be possible, to be reconciled unto God: If being touch'd with a lively sence of his *sins* and his *obstinacy*, he is at last willing to amend, and *return unto God with all his heart*: Then 'tis plain, that though his Condition may be bad, yet it is not desperate. God has not yet given him up a *Slave* to the *Devil*, but still continues to him the benefit of *Repentance*; so that if he be not again wanting to himself, he may yet hope for a sufficient *measure* of *Divine Grace* to bring him by *Repentance* to *Salvation*.

But

But here still there will one difficulty more arise, and it is this. How such a Person shall satisfy himself that he is *truly penitent*; and by consequence that he may depend upon the mercy of God for Pardon, notwithstanding his former *Impenitence*?

To this I answer, *1st*. If the person who thus *repents* at the last, be in a condition of continuing yet longer in this world, he may then be sure of the *sincerity* of his *Repentance*, and of the consequent security of his Condition, by the same experience that all others are, *viz.* by the *fruits* of it in a constant performance of Piety and Good-Works. But now

2dly. If the Question be of a *dying Penitent*, then indeed it will be a matter of more difficulty to answer it. For if on the one hand I may not be so uncharitable as to conclude *at all adventures* the utter invalidity of such a *Repentance*, because for ought I know, 'tis possible for a man in the very last act of his life, to be struck with such a true contrition for his sins, as might,
if

The Seventh Sermon.

if he had lived, have produced a *real Amendment*, and then *God* who is able to discern this, will consider him accordingly: Yet neither on the other, can we ever be sure that such a *Repentance* is sincere, nor by consequence may we at all *Adventures* suppose in favour of it.

The truth is, a *Death-bed Repentance* is, in the best prospect we can take of it, *exceeding dangerous*, and in the case before us, I am afraid *desperate*. Nor have we in all the *Holy Scripture*, so much as one *Example* of any one that purposely put off his *Repentance* to this time, and yet was saved upon it; and the *Instance* of *Felix* in my *Text*, is a terrible one to the contrary. He was touch'd with *St. Paul's* Preaching, and seared the *Judgment* of which he spake. But he put off the *Apostle* to a more *convenient season*; and we do not find that ever that more *convenient season* came, or that he had ever any future call to *Repentance*.

It is not to be question'd, but that if a man be come to this sad pass, he ought by all means to be exhorted to
re-

repent, because otherwise to be sure, he must perish, and 'tis possible this may save him. But what that *Repentance* is, which a wicked man then exercises, we cannot tell, and the effect of it must be left to *God's Judgment* to declare; and it will be our parts instead of being over-inquisitive into these secrets, to be careful not to expose our selves to a condition so full of *danger*; in which there is much to be *feared*, but little *Hope*, and no *Security*.

And now, what more remains to engage us to a *speedy*, or rather to a present *Repentance*, but that having thus largely shewn the danger of deterring our duty, I very briefly close all with a more excellent Prospect,

Idly, Of the *Comfort* and *Satisfaction* that will arrive to us from the *Consideration* of having *perfected* this great and necessary Work.

This is a Point on which it were as easie to speak great things, as I think 'tis needless so to do. If to Live in a *State of Friendship* with *God*, and to be able to look forward into Eternity
with

with Comfort; If to be freed from the *stings* of *Conscience*, and the *Terrors* of *Everlasting Punishment*, and instead thereof to be full of a well-grounded Confidence that *Heaven* and all its *Glories* shall be one day Ours; in short, If there be any such thing as a *Felicity* to be attain'd either in this World or in the Next, such a *Christian* as this possesses it all; For he enjoys the *Love*, the Favour of that *God*, who is the Great dispenser of all Good both in *Heaven* and *Earth*.

O the Peace and the Tranquility! The Pleasure, and the Satisfaction of that Man, who lives in such a State as this! Whose *Conscience* acquits him; whose *Innocence* supports him in the midst of Dangers; whose *Piety* and *Virtue* cheer his Soul, and fill it with the most excellent Comforts; whose *Present Condition* is full of *Hope*, and whose *Future Prospect* is to be for Ever Happy.

How will such a *Christian* as this Triumph over all the Miseries, and despise the Blandishments of a vain, uncertain, sinful World? Even *Death* its self the last, and greatest of Terrors, will
not

not be able to amaze him: But rather He will welcome it with a chearful mind, and with *St. Paul desire to depart, and to be with Christ*; whilst able with him to cry out; *I have fought a good fight; I have finish'd my Course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which God the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day.* Phil. i. 23. 2Tim. iv. 7.

But O Wretched Sinner! Who by thy unreasonable *Delays* in a matter of such vast concernment both to thy Present and Eternal *Happiness*, not only exposest thy self to the danger of *Damnation* in the other World, but deprivest thy self of the only true and real *Felicity* of this!

Men indeed may flatter themselves in their Evil doings, and find a great deal of seeming satisfaction in their ways of Wickedness. But when all is done, the Remembrance of this one thing, That in a little time they must die, and come to *Judgment*, will ever and anon come in and embitter all their Enjoyments; and convince them that 'tis the way of *Piety that alone is the way of pleasantness, and her paths the paths of peace.* Pro. iii. 17.

But

But I must not pursue these Reflections any farther; I will therefore conclude this whole Argument, with those excellent Words of the Son of Sirach, Ecclus. v. xviii.

Eccl. v. 7. *Make no long tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day.*

Ib. xviii. *Before Judgment, examine thy self, and in the day of Visitation thou shalt find mercy.*

---21. *Humble thy self before thou be sick, and in the time of sins show repentance.*

---22. *Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy Vows in due time, and defer not until death, to be justified.*

A N

AN
EXHORTATION
To Mutual
Charity and Union
AMONG
PROTESTANTS.

IN A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
KING and QUEEN
AT
HAMPTON-COURT,
MAY 21. 1689.

S ROM.

NOTICE

TO ALL

CHURCH AND LAY

MEMBERS

PROTESTANT

CHURCH

SERMON

PREACHED

BY

THE

MINISTER

ROM. XV. 5, 6, 7.

Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

THE Words are part of that affectionate Application, which the *Apostle* here makes of his excellent Discourse concerning the Exercise of Christian Charity, in that great Instance of Condescension to the Infirmities of our Weaker Brethren, in the foregoing Chapter. See ch. xiv.

The Occasion of it was this :

There were in those first times, many among the *Jews*, who tho' they were converted to the *Christian Faith*, yet still continued zealous for the Law; Acts xv. 1. ---xxi. 20. and not only carefully observed them-

Acts xv.
19, 28.
Gal. v.
3, &c.

selves all the *Rites and Ceremonies* of it, but would also by any means impose upon all others also, the observance of them. And how earnest they were upon this account, and how much they hated the *Gentile Converts*, upon whom the *Apostles* did not think fit to lay any such burden, many Passages both in the *Acts* and in *St. Paul's Epistles*, do sufficiently declare.

Gal. v. 1.

Rom. xi.
18, &c.

But as in all other differences it seldom happens that the whole heat of the Controversie rests only on one side; so here, tho' the *Jewish Converts* were both the first beginners of this Dispute, and the more zealous pursuers of it, yet neither were the *Gentile Christians* utterly without fault in it; but so far stood fast in that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, as not only to despise the weakness and ignorance of the others, but to be ready almost even to cut them off from their Communion.

I need not say how dangerous such a Controversie as this might have proved, nor what a stop it might have put to the progress of *Christianity*, in those first beginnings of the *Gospel*. Great were the difficulties which the *Apostles* underwent on this occasion; whilst they
endea-

endeavoured so to menage themselves between these two Parties, as not only not to offend either, but, if it were possible, to bring them Both to such a temper with one another, that neither the *Gentile Convert* might despise the weakness of his *Judaizing Brother*; nor the *Jewish* Votary judge too severely of the Liberty of the *Gentile Christian*.

And this was the design of *St. Paul* in the *Chapter* before my *Text*. Where addressing himself, as indeed he seems to have done this whole *Epistle*, to the *Gentile Christians*; and whom, as having the truer Notion of their *Christian Liberty* as to this matter, he therefore calls the *strong*, the *strong in the Faith*: *ROM. XV. I.* v. 1. he exhorts them in a most admirable Discourse on this Subject throughout the whole *Chapter*, to bear the *Infirmities of the Weak*; i. e. not to grieve nor despise them for their mistaken Zeal, but by complying a little, and condescending to their *Infirmities*, to endeavour, if it should please God, to draw them out of their Error. *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to Edification.* And then concludes all in the words of the *Text*, wherein we have,

S 3

First,

First, A hearty Prayer to God Almighty, That he would inspire them so effectually with a Spirit of Unity and Charity, that notwithstanding all their differences, they might joyn unanimously, both Jews and Gentiles, not only in the same common Worship of God, but with the same hearty affection to one another :

Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, Secondly, an Exhortation, as the final result of his whole Discourse, That they should with all charitable condescension and kindness receive, and love, and assist one another, and not despise, and censure, and deprive one another, either of their Charity, or their Communion ;

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God.

In

In which words, as they thus lye before us in the Occasion and Design of them, there are two things that will offer themselves to our consideration.

First, An Exhortation to these Dissenting Christians, and in them to all of us, Not to break either Charity or Communion with one another, upon the account of such things wherein we may securely differ; but mutually to bear with one another in our differences.

Secondly, An Enforcement of this Exhortation, from two of the greatest Considerations that can possibly engage any Christian to an observance of it; viz.

See Theodor-
et, Chrysost.
Theophylact,
&c. in loc.

First, From the Example of Christ towards us.

Secondly, From the greater Glory that will hereby redound to God.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God.

I shall make it my endeavour, with all the plainness that I can, to pursue both the *Exhortation* and the *Enforcement* in the three following *Propositions*.

I. That there may be *differences* in matters of lesser moment between very good and zealous Christians, without any just reflection either upon the *Men*, or upon their *Religion*.

II. That these *differences* ought not to hinder such Persons from agreeing together not only in a *common Charity*, but if it be possible, in a *common Worship* of God too.

III. That to this End it is the Duty of all *Christians*, but especially of those who are the *strong in Faith*, not only to pray for such a *Union*, but, as they have opportunity, heartily to labour Themselves, and earnestly to stir up all Others, to endeavour after it.

Prop. I.

And, First ; That there may be Differences in matters of lesser moment between very good and zealous Christians, without
any

any just Reflection upon the Men, or upon their Religion.

For proof of which, I think I need go no farther than the very History of my *Text*. I have already said how great a division there was between the *Jewish* and the *Gentile* Converts, about the *Ritual Observances* of the *Law* of *Moses*, and with what a *Zeal* the *Dissenting Parties* managed the Dispute, till they had almost lost their *Charity*, and made a deplorable *Schism* in the *Church of Christ*. And yet I am confident no Man will say that this was at all derogatory either to the *Truth* of their *Common Christianity*, or to the *Infallible Authority* with which the *Apostles* had deliver'd it unto them.

And for the *Parties* themselves that thus differ'd with one another, that they had a true *Zeal* on both sides for the *Glory of God*, and thought it matter of *Conscience*, the one to *observe* these *Ceremonial Institutions* as what God still required of them; the other to *refuse* any such *Imposition*, as not only a needless Burden, but even repugnant to the *Grace of Christ* declared to them in his *Gospel*;

Act. xv. 28.
Gal. v. 2.

Gospel; S. Paul, in the prosecution of this very Argument, does clearly bear witness to them, Ch. xiv, 6. Where he makes use of this very thing as one Reason why they should mutually tolerate one another in their Dissensions; viz. That however they differ'd in their Notions as to these particulars, yet they were both perfectly agreed in the same common Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Discharge of their Duty. He that

Rom. xiv.
6. *regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

And indeed, either we must say, that all, even the least *Points*, relating to our *Religion*, are so clearly and plainly revealed, that no *Honest Man* can possibly be mistaken, if he will but impartially enquire into them; which from the *Differences* of whole *Parties* concerning these things, 'tis plain they are not: Or else Men's different Capacities, and Opportunities, and Tempers, and Education consider'd, 'tis in vain to expect that

that all Good Men should agree in all their *Notions* of *Religion*, any more than we see they do in any other concerns whatsoever. And who am I, that I should dare to pronounce a Sentence of *Reprobation* against any one, in whom there appear all the other *Characters* of an humble, upright, sincere Christian, only because he has not perhaps met with the same Instruction, or read the same Books, or do's not argue the same way; In a Word, because he is not so wise, or it may be, is wiser than I am, and sees farther than I do, and therefore is not exactly of my Opinion in every thing.

Now if this be so, as both the *Principles* of *Reason* conclude it very well may be, and the common *Experience* of Mankind, not only in the particular concern of *Religion*, but in most other things assures us that it is: That Men's Understandings are different, and they will argue different waies, and entertain different Opinions from one another, about the same things, and yet may nevertheless deserve on all sides, to be esteemed very good and wise Men for all that: How vain then must that
Argument

Histoire des variations des Eglises Protestantes : par Mr. l'Evêque de MEAUX. The Design of which, may be seen in the Summary of his Preface — *Les Variations dans la foy prouvent certaine de fausseté. — Caractère des hérésies d'être variables — Ce Caractère reconnu dans tous les Ages de l'Eglise. — Caractère d'immutabilité dans la foy de l'Eglise Catholique. — Que les variations de l'un des partis (de Protestans) est une preuve contre l'Autre, &c.*

Argument be, which a *Late Author* of the *Chapel of Rome*, has with so much *Pomp* revived against us, from our *Differences* in a few *lesser Points* of our *Religion*, to conclude us to be *Erroneous* in the *greater*; and that because we are not exactly of the *same Opinion* in every *thing*, that therefore we ought to be *credited* in *nothing*; that is to say, That because *Protestants* when they *differ*, are mistaken on *One Side*, therefore when they *agree*, they are mistaken on *Both*?

1st. It is certain that amidst all our other *Divisions*, we are yet on all sides agreed in whatsoever is *Fundamental* in the *Faith*, or *necessary* to be *believed* and *professed* by us in order to our *Salvation*.

There is no good *Protestant*, but what does firmly believe all the *Articles* of the *Apostles Creed*; and embraces the *Holy Scriptures* as the *Word of God*, and *Rule of his Faith*, and readily acknowledges

ledges whatsoever is plainly revealed therein, and is at all times disposed to submit to any thing that can by any necessary and certain Consequence be proved to him thereby. In short, Our Differences, whatsoever they are, I will be bold to say, They do no more, nor even so much concern the foundations of Christianity, as those of the Judaizing Christians here did. If their differing therefore with one another, was no Prejudice to the Truth of their common Christianity then, I would fain know for what Reason our Differences, which are lesser, shall become so much a greater Argument against our common Christianity now. But,

Secondly, If our differing from one another in some Points, be an Argument that we are not certain in any; How shall we be sure that those of the Church of Rome are not altogether as uncertain as we are; seeing we are sure that they do no less differ among themselves, and that in Points too, much more considerable than we do?

For to take only one Instance instead of many, and that so considerable, that
Card.

Præf. ad
lib. de
Summ. P.
T. I. p.
592. In-
golftad. A.
1586.

Card. Bellarmin once thought the *Sum of Christianity*, he meant the *Sum of Popery*, to consist in it, viz. The *Prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome*, both in and over the *Church of Christ*. * Some there are who hold the *Pope* to be *Head of the Church*, by *Divine Right*: Others the *contrary*. * Some, That he is *Infalible*: Others, That he is not. * Some, That the *Pope alone*, without a *Council*, may determine all *Controversies*: Others, That he *cannot*. Now if in these, and many other *points* of no less importance, they themselves are as far from *agreeing* with one another, as they can possibly pretend us to be; what shall hinder us, but that we return their own *Inference* upon them, That seeing they *differ* among themselves in such things as these, they are so far from that *absolute Infalibility* they set up for, that in truth they have not so much as any *certainty* among them, even in those *Points* wherein they do agree.

Bellarmin.
to. I. p.
1377. de
Not. Eccl.
A.

Is it that in their *Church*, tho, there be indeed as many *differences* as in ours, yet this makes not against them, seeing they have a certain *Rule*, whenever they please, for the *composing* of them,
viz.

viz. The Definition of the Pope, and of the Church? This indeed, I find is commonly said by them: But then certainly, if they have such a *ready means*, as they say, of *Agreement* among them, 'tis the more shame for them, that they do not agree; he being much more inexcusably guilty in the omission of any duty, who having a *ready means* to fulfil it, neglects so to do; than he who has none; or, which is the same thing, does not know that he has any. But indeed they have no *means* of *Ending* their *differences*, any more than we have; The *Holy Scriptures* we both of us acknowledged to be the *Word of God*; and an *Infallible Rule of Faith*; but for any other direction, they are not yet agreed where to seek it: And sure that can be no very good *means* of *Ending* all their other *Differences*, which is it self one of their chiefest *Controversies*.

Or is it, That they agree in *matters* of *Faith*, and differ only in *those things* that do not belong to it? Because if they differ about any Point, they for that very Reason, conclude it to be *no matter of Faith*. But besides the Impertinence of this Answer, which amounts to no more than this, that they do agree in what they

See Mr. Cbellingworth, p. 99, 100.

Bellarmin. p. 1378. B.

they *do* agree, and *differ* only in those things in which they *differ*: This is what we say for our selves concerning our Differences; We agree in all those things that are necessary to a *Sound* and *Saving Faith*; and if we *differ* in matters of lesser moment, 'tis no more than what all other Christians have ever done, and what those of the *Church of Rome* it self at this day do.

So that still it must remain, either that those *Differences* which were among the *Christians* of old, and which are among us now, are no *Prejudice* at all to the *common Truth* which we profess; or if they be, the Consequence will fall upon those of the *Church of Rome* no less, that I do not say, and more severely, than upon us, and be of the same Force against *Their Religion*, that it can be against *Ours*.

But I must carry this *Reflection* a great deal farther; for,

Thirdly, If once this *Principle* be allowed, That because Men differ in some things, they ought not to be credited in any, what then will become, not only of the *Protestant Religion*, as it now stands in Opposition to *Popery*, but even
of

of *Christianity* it self? For might not a *Turk* or a *Jew*, if he were minded to give himself so much trouble to so little purpose as this late *Author* has done, draw out a large *HISTORY* of the *VARIATIONS* of *Christians* among themselves, from the Controversie of the *Text*, unto this day; and then by the very same *Principle* conclude against us all, That we have none of us any certain Grounds for Our *Religion*, because the *differences* that are among us, plainly shew, that some of us must be deceived? And to go yet one step farther; Might not a *Sceptick* by the same *Rule*, argue against all *Religion*, and even against all *Reason* too; That the disagreement of mankind in these and many other *Points* of the greatest *Importance*, clearly proves that there is no *certainty* in any *thing*; and therefore that we ought not to rely either upon the *one*, or upon the *other*?

It remains therefore, that unless we will overthrow all the measures of *Christian Charity* towards our *Neighbour*, and the *common Truth*, I do not say both of *their Faith* and of our own, but even of *Christianity* it self, nay and of all *Religion* and *Reason* in general; We

T

must

must conclude, That good Christians may *differ* from one another in matters of lesser moment, without any *just Reflection* either upon *themselves* or their *Religion*.

But here therefore I must desire not to be misunderstood. For when I say, that Christians may, without any danger to themselves, or disparagement to the Truth of their Religion, *differ* with one another; I mean only, as the *Terms* of my *Proposition* expressly shew, in *lesser matters*; such as do not concern the *Fundamentals* of *Faith*, nor destroy the *Worship* of *God*; nor are otherwise so *clearly revealed*, but that Wise and Good Men, after all their Enquiries, may still continue to *differ* in their *Opinions* concerning them. For otherwise, if Interest and Prejudice blind men's Eyes, and they *err* because they resolve they will not be convinced; and so by their own Fault continue in Mistakes contrary to the *Foundation* of *Faith*, and destructive of *Piety*: If, for instance, Men will profess to believe but in *One God*, and yet *worship* *Thousands*; If they will read over the *second Commandment*, and nevertheless both *make* and *bow* down before *Graven Images* in despite

despite of it; If, whilst they acknowledge *Christ* to have instituted the Blessed *Eucharist* in both kinds, they command it to be administered but in One; and pray in an unknown Tongue, tho' S. Paul has spent almost a whole Chapter to shew the Folly and Unreasonableness of it: These are Errors in which I am not concerned; and tho I should be unwilling, even here, at all adventures to pronounce any Sentence against the Men; yet I must needs say, That Religion cannot be very sound, which stands corrupted with so many, and such fundamental Abuses.

And this makes the difference between those Errors for which we separate from the Church of Rome, and those Controversies which sometimes arise among Protestants themselves. The former are in matters of the greatest consequence, such as tend directly to overthrow the Integrity of Faith, and the Purity of our Worship; and therefore such as are in their own nature destructive of the very Essentials of Christianity. Whereas our Differences do not at all concern the Foundations either of Faith or Worship; and are therefore such in which Good Men, if they be otherwise diligent and

sincere in their Enquiry, may differ without any Prejudice to themselves, or any just Reflection upon the Truth of their common Profession.

Which being thus cleared, in answer to the little Endeavours of one of the latest of our Adversaries against us upon this Account; I go on, Secondly, to shew,

Prop. 2.

Secondly, That such differences as these, ought not to hinder such persons from agreeing together, not only in a common Charity; but, if it be possible, in a common Worship of God too.

This is what S. Paul here expressly exhorts these dissenting Christians to, and earnestly praiseth to God that he might see accomplished in them. That when they came together to the publick Offices of the Church, to offer up their common Prayers and Thanksgivings to Him, they might do it, not only in the same Form of Words, but with the same Affection of Mind too, both towards God, and towards one another: Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may
with

with one Mind and one Mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such was their Duty to one another then; and we ought certainly no less to esteem the same to be our Duty towards one another now: And

1. As to the business of *Charity*;

God forbid that any *Differences* in Religion whatsoever, much less such little ones as those we are now speaking of, should ever make us deny that to our fellow Christians. 'Tis true indeed, our Saviour *Christ* once foretold to his *Disciples*, That there should rise up Men from among their *Brethren*, who should upon this account not only put Joh. xvi. 2. them out of their *Synagogues*, but even think that it was a matter of Religion to kill them. But they were *Jews*, not *Christians*, who were to do this; and He expressly adds, That 'twas their ignorance of Him and his Religion that should carry them on to so furious and intemperate a Zeal; For these things, saies he, shall they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. And we must confess it, to the scandal of our *Holy Religion*, that there are a

— V. 3.

sort of Men who call themselves *Christians* now, that still continue to fulfil this *Prophecy* in the very Letter of it; who not only cast us out of their *Synagogues*, that we should not much complain of; and, as far as in them lies, cut us off from all the Hopes of *Salvation* too; but, to compleat the parallel, openly arm the whole World against us, and teach Men to believe, that 'tis a Work of *Piety* to root us out of it; and therefore, that *whosoever killeth us, does do God service*. But in this, as well as in the rest of their *Errors*, they give us but the more effectually to understand how little they have in them of the *true Spirit of Christianity*; for sure such things as these they could never do, but only that, as our *Saviour* in that other case before said, *they have not known the Father nor Him*. And I hope I shall need no Argument to perswade you not to be misled by that, which we all, of us so justly lament, as one of the most deplorable Corruptions even of *Popery* it self.

Christianity commands us to love our *Enemies*, and sure then we cannot but think it very highly reasonable not to hate our *Brethren*; but especially on
such

such an account, as, if it be once admitted, will in this *divided state* of the Church, utterly drive the very name of *brotherly Love* and *Charity* out of it: seeing by whatsoever Arguments we shall go about to justify our *uncharitableness* to any Others, they will all equally warrant them to with-hold in like manner their *Charity* from us.

There is no honest, sincere Christian, how *erroneous* soever he may be, but what at least is perswaded that he is in the right; and looks upon Us to be as far from the Truth by differing from him, as We esteem Him for not agreeing with us. Now if upon the sole account of such Differences it be lawful for us to *hate* Another; we must for the very same Reason allow it to be as lawful for Him also to *hate* Us. Thus shall we at once invert the *Characteristick* of our Religion; *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*; and turn it into the quite contrary Note: Whilst we make our *hatred* to our Brother the great mark of our Zeal for our Religion; and conclude him to *love Christ* the most, who the least loves his fellow Christian.

Joh. xiii.
35.

How much rather ought we to consider, with our *Apostle*, the *love* of our dear *Master* to us, even whilst we were yet his *Enemies*, and love those whom we ought to hope, notwithstanding all their *Errors*, are yet still his *Friends*; and not think those unworthy of our *Charity*, whom we piously presume *God* will not think unworthy of his *Favour*? We suppose them to be mistaken in those things wherein they differ from us, and perhaps they are so; but yet we must consider, that we our selves also are but *Men*, and therefore may err; and They as verily think Us in the wrong, as we do Them: And, for ought I know, we must leave it to the *Day of Judgment* to decide the *Controversie*, which of us is in the right. In the mean time, if they are mistaken, I am sure our *uncharitableness* is not the way to convince them of their *Error*: but may rather indispose them to consider the *Weight* of our *Arguments* as they ought, whilst they see so little regard in our *Affections* towards them. In short, if we are indeed, what we esteem our selves to be, *the strong in the Faith*, let us then remember, that tho' *Charity* be *their Duty* too as well as *ours*, yet 'tis
to

to such as We are, especially, that St. Paul addresses the *Exhortation* of the Text, *to bear the Infirmitie of the Weak*; and *to receive one another, as Christ also hath received us, to the Glory of God.* But, Verse 1. 7.

2. Such *Differences* as these, ought not only not to lessen our *Charity*, but, if it be possible, not to hinder us from joyning together in the same common *Worship* of God with one another.

This was what these *dissenting Christians*, notwithstanding all their Heats and Contentions, nevertheless still continued to do. They did *with one Mouth glorifie God*, even when their Differences would not suffer them to do it with *one Heart*. They united together in a *common Worship* of God, tho' they could not unite either in Opinion or Affection with one another.

Indeed where Mens *Errors* are such as do utterly subvert the very *Essentials* of our *Religious Worship*, it is there in vain to hope for any *Communion* in the *Publick Service* of God with them. We must not destroy the *Principles* of *Christianity*, out of a Zeal to enlarge the *Communion* of *Christians*. He would
be

be a very condescending Votary indeed, who for the sake of *praying to God* with the *Papist*, would *pray* to the *Blessed Virgin* and *Saints* too with him : Who rather than be excluded their *Churches*, would *bow down* before their *Images* ; and not only *worship* their *Host*, but even give up his *Right* to the *Cup* in the *Eucharist*, only that he might receive that holy Sacrament in their Company. It is, no doubt, a very desirable thing to *lessen* the *differences* of *Christians*, and enlarge their *Communion*, as far as ever we can : And it has never gone well with the Church of *Christ*, since Men have been so narrow-spirited as to mix the *Controversies* of *Faith*, with their *Publick Forms* of *Worship* ; and have made their *Liturgies*, instead of being *Offices* of *Devotion to God*, become *Tests* and *Censures* of the *Opinions* of their *Brethren*. But yet when all is done, the *Truths* of *Christianity* must not be sacrificed to the *Peace* of *Christians* ; nor the *Honour* of *God* be given up, to keep up a *Unity* and *Communion* with one another.

But where Mens *Differences* are in *Points* that do not at all affect their *Religious Service* ; or not so much, but that

that God may be very well worshipp'd, and yet Communion with our fellow Christians preserved too; in such cases as this, our *dissentions* ought not only not to lessen our *Charity*, but not to break our *Unity* neither: We may continue to differ, as the *Christians* in my Text did; and yet *with one Mind, and one Mouth*, glorifie God, as St. Paul exhorted them to do.

And this brings me to the *Third* and *Last Point*.

Thirdly, That to this End, it is the Duty Prop. 3. *of all of us, but especially of the stronger Christians, not only to Pray for such a Union, but also, as they have opportunity, heartily to labour themselves, and earnestly to stir up all others to endeavour after it.*

I do not believe there is any good Christian so little affected with those unhappy Divisions under which the Church at this day labours, as not both heartily to deplore them, and to think that nothing could be too much, that might innocently be done on all hands, for the redressing of them. But then I am sure the natural Consequence of this must be, what both my Text, and this

Discourse

Discourse are designed to exhort you to; viz. That we ought every one of us, not only heartily to *pray* for such a *Union*; but also, as we have opportunity, earnestly to labour for the attainment of it.

Indeed for what concerns the whole Body of the *Catholick Church* on Earth, so many are the Disputes that have arisen among the several Parties and Communions of it, and some of them in *Points* so near to the Foundations of Christianity, that whilst Men resolve to keep fast to their Conclusions, and will not suffer the plainest Arguments to convince them of their *Errors*, 'tis in vain to hope ever to see things brought to such a *Temper*, as we could wish in that. But especially whilst that part which is the most corrupt, is so far from being willing to concur to any such *Union*, that on the contrary, she has cut off all possibility of attaining it: And by arrogating an unwarrantable *Infallibility* to her self, and *Authority* over all others, will neither reform her own *Abuses*, nor admit any into her *Communion*, that will not profess the same *Errors*, in which she herself stands involved. So that here, all we can even wish for, is, that Men
would

would at last be so wise, as tho' they differ in *Opinion*, yet to love as *Brethren*, and agree together in a *common Charity*, till we shall be so happy as to unite in a *common Faith* and *worship* of God.

But for us whom it has pleased God, by delivering us from the *Errors* and *Superstitions* of the *Church of Rome*, to unite together in the common name of *Protestant, Reformed Christians*, would we but as heartily labour after *Peace*, as we are all of us very highly exhorted to it; I cannot see why we who are so happily joyn'd together in a *common profession of the same Faith*, at least, I am sure in all the *necessary Points* of it; and I hope amidst all our *lesser Differences*, in a *common love and charity to one another*, should not also be united in the same *common Worship* of God too.

I will not now enter into any *Dispute*, to shew how little reason there is for any one to *separate* from the *Offices* of the *Church of England*, upon the account of those few *Exceptions* that have sometimes been offer'd to justify the doing of it. This is a work both too large for such a *Discourse*; and besides the design of my present *Undertaking*.

And

And that one Concession of many of our *Brethren* themselves, who tho' they continue *ordinarily* to *separate* from us, yet nevertheless freely allow of what they call *Occasional Communion* with us, I think sufficiently shews how little real ground there is for those *Scruples*, that have so long detain'd them in an unjust aversion to our Worship. Blessed be *God*, who has abundantly justified both the Purity of our *Doctrin*, and the Innocency of our *Worship*, not only by the general Approbation of the *Reformed Churches* abroad, who both freely *communicate* with us in our *religious Offices*, and have often given Testimony in favour of them; but in the happy Conviction of many at Home, who were once *Enemies* to our Constitution, but who now go with us into the same *House of God as Friends*. 001

And indeed the things for which some forsake us now, are no other than what they were in the *Beginning* of the *Reformation*; when yet there was no such thing as *Separation* from our *Communion*: But on the contrary, the old *Non-Conformists* themselves, tho' they disliked some things in our *Worship*, yet freely declared they thought
it

it a Crime to *divide* the Church on the account of them. And they who at this day *separate* from us, for the sake of those few *Constitutions* that have been made for the Order and Decency of our *Publick Worship*, must for the same reason have *separated* from all the Churches of the *Christian World*, for above 1500 years; in none of which they might not have found as great, that I do not say, and much greater, occasion of *Offence*, than they can in Ours.

But yet, since Mens *Scruples* are unaccountable, and after all that can be said, they will still differ even about *indifferent* things, and be *afraid* many times, where *no Fear is*; and a too long Experience has already shewn us, That if ever we mean to accomplish that *Union* so much recommended to us by our *Apostle*, so advantageous to the Church at all times, but especially at this time so necessary to our Peace and our Establishment, that it seems to be the only way that yet remains to settle and to secure us; and upon all these accounts, so much to be desired by all Good Men, we must seek it by that Rule which St. *Paul* here proposed to
the

the Dissenting Christians of my Text,
 Rom. xv. 1. *We then, that are strong in the faith, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please our selves.* I cannot but think it a Reflection becoming every good Christian among us, but in a more especial manner, worthy the Consideration of such an *Auditory* as this, Whether somewhat may not yet be done for the sake of Peace, and to bring things to such a * *TEMPER*, that both *Order* and *Decency* may still be preserved, and yet our *Unity* no longer broken.

* See the
 Petition
 of the
 Archbishop
 and Bishops
 to King
 James. for
 which they
 were com-
 mitted to
 the Tower.

And for *Exhortations* to so Good and Christian a Work, shall I set before you the *Example* of our Blessed *Saviour* recommended to us in the *Text*, with what a mighty *condescension* he has treated Us; how he came down from Heaven, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of a sinful man, humbled Himself even to the Death upon the Cross for us? How He still bears not only with our *Infirmities*, but with our *Sins* too; and by all these wonderful instances of his *Love* to us, teacheth us, says St. John,
 1 Joh. iv. 11 *How we ought also to love one another?*

Or

Or rather, shall I shew you, how far such a Blessed *Union* as this, would conduce to the *Glory* of God, to the *Security* of our Religion, and to the *Promotion* of Peace, and *Charity*, and *Piety* among us?

I need not say what a dishonour our *Divisions* have already brought to the *Reformation*, nor what a stop they have put to the *progress* of it. Great, to be sure, is the *Advantage* which our *Enemies* either have, or at least hoped to have made, by those *Contests* which they have taken so much pains both to *bring in*, and to *keep up* among us: And methinks there should need no other *Argument* to stir up every true Friend to the name of *Protestant*, to endeavour all he can to compose our *Differences*, than this one thing, That we are sufficiently convinced who they are that we *please*, and whose *Interests* we serve, by the continuance of them.

Let us add to this, what great Obligations our Holy Religion lays upon us, to follow after those things that Rom. xiv. make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another: How our Saviour has set it down as the very Badge of our Discipleship;

U

By

- Joh. xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another: What Exhortations his Apostles have given us; If it be possible, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. But especially with reference to the differences about Religion, To mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the Doctrine which we have learnt, and avoid them.*
- Rom. xii. 18.
- Rom. xvi. 17.

Phil. ii.
1, 2.

With what a scrupulous care did St. Paul manage himself between the dissenting parties in my Text? What admirable Rules did he lay down for them to walk by? And with what an affectionate earnestness did he enforce them? *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of Love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.*

And may I not beg leave, tho' not with the Authority, yet with the Charity of St. Paul, to apply all this to those unhappy Divisions that at this day rend in pieces the Church of Christ among us; and beseech you, by all these endearing Considerations, to pursue those things which may make for our Peace; and for

for the closing of those *breaches*, which the malice of our *Enemies* too successfully begun, and our own *weakness* has too fatally kept up among us.

Never, certainly, was there a time, since the name of *Separation* was first heard of among us, in which we had greater reason to consider of such a *Union*; or, I hope, a fairer opportunity to promise our selves an Accomplishment of it. Only let us be on all hands as careful to improve it, as I am persuaded we have all of us not only seem'd to desire, but have indeed earnestly long'd for it.

Let us shew the sense we have of that wonderful *Deliverance* God has given us out of the *hand* of our *Enemies*, by *uniting* our selves in the strictest League of *Friendship* with one another.

Hitherto we have defended our *Church* by our *Arguments*; let us now by our *Charity* settle and establish it, against the like *Dangers* for the time to come.

This will indeed render both our *selves* and our *Religion* Glorious to the World; and may be a Happy *Augury* that the *blessed time* so long wrapped

up in *sacred Prophecy*, is indeed now ready to be revealed: When the *Church of Christ* being purged from those *Corruptions* that have so long defaced its Beauty, shall again appear in its *primitive Purity*. When all *Herésie* and *Schism* being every where abolished, and the *Mystery of Iniquity* laid fully open, and the *Man of Sin* destroyed; true Religion and sincere Piety shall again reign throughout the World; God himself shall pitch his *Tabernacle among us*, and dwell with us, and we shall be his People, and he shall be our God.

Rev. xxi.
3.

O Blessed State of the Church Militant here on Earth! the glorious Antepast of that Peace and Piety which God has prepared for his *Church Triumphant in Heaven*! Who would not wish to see those days, when a general *Reformation*, and a true *Zeal*, and a perfect *Charity*, passing through the World, we should All be united in the same *Faith*, the same *Worship*, the same *Communion* and *Fellowship* one with another? When all *Pride* and *Prejudice*, all *Interests* and *Designs* being submitted to the Honour of God, and the discharge of our Duty, the *Holy Scriptures* shall again triumph over the vain *Traditions* of
of

of Men; and *Religion* no longer take its denomination from little *Seets* and *Factions*, but we shall all be content with the same common primitive *Names* of *Christians* and *Brethren*, and live together as becomes our Character, in *Brotherly Love* and *Christian Charity* with one another?

And who can tell but such a *Change* as this, and which we have otherwise some reason to believe is nigh at hand, may even now break forth from the midst of us, would we but all seriously labour to perfect the Great Work which the Providence of God has so gloriously begun among us, and establish that *Love* and *Unity* among our selves, which may afterwards diffuse it self from us into all the other Parts of the *Christian World* besides?

But however, whether we shall ever see, I do not say, such a Blessed *Effect* as this, but even any good Effect at all of our Endeavours here on *Earth*, or no; yet this we are sure, we shall not lose our Reward in *Heaven*. When to have contributed, tho' in the least degree, to the healing of those *divisions* we so unhappily labour under, shall be esteemed a greater Honour, than to have *silenced*

The Eighth Sermon.

all the Cavils of our *Enemies* ; and even to have pray'd, and wish'd for it, and, where we could not any otherwise have contributed our selves, but to have exhorted others to it, shall be rewarded with *Blessings, more than all the Stars in the Firmament for number.*

Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus : That ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ :

To Him be *Honour and Praise* for ever and ever. Amen.

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd before the
Honourable House of Commons,
A T
St. MARGARET'S WESTMINSTER,
June 5th. 1689.
Being
The F A S T - D A Y
Appointed by the
KING and QUEEN's Proclamation,
T O
Implore the Blessing of Almighty God
upon Their M A J E S T I E S Forces
by Sea and Land, and Success in the
War, now declared, against the
F R E N C H K I N G.

Jovis

Jovis 6^o die Junii, 1689.

Resolved,

That the Thanks of this House be given to Mr. *Wake* for the Sermon he Preached before them yesterday; And that he be desired to Print the same.

Ordered,

That Mr. *Grey* do give him the Thanks, and acquaint him with the Desires of this House accordingly.

Paul Jodrell,

Cl. Dom. Com.

OF THE
Nature and Benefit
OF A
PUBLICK HUMILIATION.

JOEL ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now saith the LORD, Turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning.

And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God, for He is Gracious and Merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth Him of the Evil.

THough the *time* of this Prophecy be uncertain, so that neither the *Jewish Rabbins*, nor *Christian Antiquaries* are able to give us any tolerable Account of it, yet is the *Design* plain, and the words of

of my *Text* a most proper and pathetick enforcement of the great duty of this day, to turn unto the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; — for he is Gracious and Merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.

If we look into the foregoing Chapter, we shall there find an astonishing Account of the great Evils that were just ready to befall the *Jews* for their Sins. But that which is yet more surprizing, is, That though all this was about to come upon them, yet were they nevertheless *insensible* of their danger, nor took any the least care to prevent their utter desolation.

To awaken a stupid and inconsiderate People, a Nation dead in Sin and Security, in the beginning of this Chapter he prepares a lofty and magnificent Scene. He sets before them a *Prophecy* of yet greater dangers than any they had hitherto experimented; and that in a manner so unusual, with such a Pomp of Words, and in such Triumphant Expressions, as carry a terror even in the Repetition of them :

Blow

Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion, sound Joel. ii. 1^r
 an Allarm in my holy Mountain ; Let
 all the Inhabitants of the Land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD cometh ; for
 it is nigh at hand : A day of darkness — 2,
 and of gloo·iness ; a day of Clouds and
 of thick darkness ; as the Morning spread
 upon the Mountains ; a great People and
 a strong, there hath not been ever the
 like , neither shall be any more after it.
 A fire devours before them, and behind — 3,
 them a flame burneth : The Land is as
 the Garden of Eden before them, and
 behind them a desolate Wilderness. The
 Earth shall quake before them ; the Hea- — 10.
 vens shall tremble ; the Sun and the Moon
 shall be dark ; and the Stars shall withdraw
 their shining.

Whatever be the Import of these
 Phrases ; whether by the mighty and
 terrible Host here spoken of, we are
 only to understand that swarm of (a) Lo- (a) *Judei*
 custs, and other Insects, that, we are *putant in*
 (b) before told, were utterly to devour *diebus Joel*
 all the Fruits of the Land : Or whe- *tam innume-*
 ther under the Character of these, we *rabilem Lo-*
custarum su-
per Judeam
venisse mul-
titudinem, ut cuncta complerent, & non dicam fruges, sed ne Vinearum
quidem & arborum Cortices, ramosque dimitterent, ita ut omni virore
consumpto arentes arborum rami. & sicca vinearum flagella remanerent. Hie-
ron. in Joel. i. v. 6. (b) Ch. i. 4.

shall

(c) See among the Ancients, *St. Hierom.* shall (c) with most Interpreters, comprehend the numerous and mighty *Armies* of the *Chaldeans* and *Babylonians*, which at divers times brought such Desolations, as we read of, upon the *Jews*: This is plain, that we have here the denunciation of some *Judgment worthy of God*, and great as the sins and incorrigibleness that occasion'd it.

Drusius in *Joel* i. 1. *Gratias* in *Joel* i. 5. *Theodoret* in *Cap* 1.4. *πνὲς μὲν ἔν ταῦτα βο-
πικῶς, εἰς τὸ Ἀσσύριον καὶ Βαβυλωνίον ἐξελήφασιν — ἐγὼ δὲ
ἀλλήστῃ μὲν ἠγγέμαι καὶ ταῦτα ὑπολαμβάνω. καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὸ ρητὸν
νοούμενα πρὸς ὅντι γνηστῶς.* v. pl.

And now, who would not here expect the *final desolation* of such a People as this? But behold, God even yet in his *Anger remembers Mercy*; and tho' they had hitherto neglected all the Calls and Invitations of his holy Prophets to *Repentance*, yet He resolves once more to try, whether they would now, at least in their dangers, hearken to his Admonitions: He raises up *Joel* at once both to set before them his Judgments, if they continu'd still *impenitent*; and to encourage them, by *repenting*, not only to prevent their Ruine, but to assure themselves of his Favour. That though they had so long neglected him, yet if they would (c) *now* even

(c) *נחמ*
יחזק, v. 12.

even now at the last, return with a true Zeal, and a sincere Affection to their Duty, they should not fail to meet with a favourable acceptance from him :

Therefore also now saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning : and rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God : for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

It is not my intention to seek a Parallel of all this, either in the *sins*, or in the danger of our own Country. I would willingly hope, that neither our *Guilt*, nor our *Incorrigibleness* have been so heinous as theirs, nor shall any such deplorable *Judgment* as this, ever, I trust, be made the punishment of what our Iniquities have indeed but too justly deserved. No, blessed be *God*, who by a wonderful Concurrence of great and singular Mercies, seems rather to call upon us to celebrate his Goodness, than to deprecate his Judgments ; to praise his Name in *Hymns* of Triumph and Eucharist, than to weep *between the Porch*
and

and the Altar, in melancholy *Litanies* to avert his Anger, and implore his Mercy. But yet since the *Goodness*, as well as *Judgments* of the Lord, are designed to bring us to *repentance*, and that whether we look back into our own particular Actions, or consider those Publick and National Transgressions, whereby we have so long and loudly call'd to Heaven for vengeance; we must with shame and indignation confess our selves some of the greatest of Sinners; I cannot but think, both the Solemn Occasion of *this Day*, and the Design of my *Text*, to be a most proper and seasonable Admonition to us, to *turn unto the Lord our God*, and to implore his Blessing upon our present Enterprises, that those vile *Insects*, the *Locusts* and *Caterpillars*, that have so barbarously consumed our Neighbours round about us; our worse than *Assyrian* or *Babylonian* Enemies, may not be able to prevail against us.

And indeed, however it has pleased God, as at this time, to give us some Encouragement to *trust in his Mercy*; yet we cannot so soon forget, that we have also born the punishment of our *sins*. For not to repass upon the things
that

that are at a greater distance from us ; let the Instances still fresh in all our Memories, speak to us : What just Apprehensions did we but very lately lye under of our *Lives*, and of what is yet dearer to us than our *Lives*, our *Liberty*, and our *Religion* ? How did our Enemies not only project our Ruin, but as if it were already accomplished, begin to say in their hearts, nay, they began freely to speak it out to us ; *Aha ! so would we have it : Persecute* Psal. lxxi. 9. *them, and take them ; for there is none to deliver them.*

And if now we are no longer exposed to those dangers that *so lately* threatned us ; if God has begun, upon our late more serious concern for Religion, and more general return to him, to give us some Testimony of his gracious Designations towards us ; This certainly ought to be so far from lessening our *solemn Humiliation* at this time, that it should rather engage us to be the more forward in perfecting our *Repentance*, the greater Encouragement we have to hope, that it shall be accepted at our hands. And I must now beg leave, with so much the more Earnestness to enforce the *Duty* of my *Text* ;
There-

The Ninth Sermon.

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rent your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God.

By how much I hope I may with the greater assurance propose to you the *Promise* of it for your Encouragement:

For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

I have already pointed out to you the two great *parts* of my *Text*; and which must therefore be the Subject of my Discourse upon it; viz.

I. The Address of the Holy Prophet to his *Countrey*, and in that the *Exhortation*, which I am earnestly in the Name of God to recommend unto you this day;

To turn unto the LORD your God with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

II. The

II. The great *Encouragement* which he offer'd to induce them, and which ought to be of no less a *force* to stir up all of us to a serious and diligent performance of it :

For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

I begin with the *former* of these, the *Exhortation* of my *Text* :

I. To turn unto the LORD your God with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

And here I presume I shall not need to tell you, That all this is but a larger Paraphrase of what I may in other Words call a *General and National Repentance*, of those *Publick and National Sins* which had provoked God Almighty to send down so many Judgments upon them, and to threaten them with yet greater, if they continued still in their *Impenitence*. And indeed, what could be more reasonable, than by such a Solemn and Universal Acknowledgment both

of the *Evils* they had committed, and of the *Judgments* which they deserved, and of the *sorrow* they were now touch'd with for their *Offences*; to appease *God's* Anger for that *General* Incontinency, by which they had so long exposed both his *Goodness* and his *Justice* to *Contempt*, among the *Heathen* round about him?

For however it be very certain, that all the *outward pomp* and *solemnity* of *Repentance*, the *fasting*, and the *weeping*, and the *mourning*, are at best but a *form of Godliness*, empty and unprofitable, unless there be also added to these that *true inward change of Mind*, in which alone consists the *Power* of it; yet there may be such *Circumstances* and *Cases* put, wherein this *Duty* must pass beyond the *Heart* and the *Closet*: and the *Humiliation* will be imperfect, if it be not as *publickly* set forth to the *Eyes of Men*, as it is *sincerely* perform'd in the *sight of God*.

And such especially must be the *Repentance* for *National* Sins. Where *Mens Transgressions* have been *open* and *notorious*, there their *Return* also must be no less *Solemn* and *Evident*; that so the *Honour* as well as *Justice* of *God*

God may be vindicated in their Forgiveness; and some sort of Reparation made not only for the Guilt which they have contracted, but also for the Scandal which they have given to his Honour and Religion in the World.

Now 'tis this which at once both declares the *Piety*, and commands the *publick Humiliation* of *THIS DAY*. And for the due discharge whereof, I must intreat you to go along with me in these following Reflections.

First, That though, as I have just now shewn, there must be the *publick marks* of *Sorrow* and *Humiliation* in our *publick Repentance*, yet we must by no means stop in these; nor think that this is all that God requires of us in order to our Forgiveness.

This was indeed the *Vanity* of the *Jews* heretofore, and is too much the folly of some misguided *Christians* now.

Their Indignation against their Sins, and against themselves for having committed them, was spent especially in the outward appearance of Sorrow: *They rent their cloaths, and put on sack-* 2 Sm. iii.

1 King. xxi.
27.

cloth; they wept, and fasted, and went softly; and then they supposed they had done their business; though it may be their Souls were not yet humbled; nor their Hearts at all broken with any true Contrition for their Sins.

And so among those of the Church of Rome at this day: If we may believe some of their greatest Casuists, an *external Worship* is sufficient to carry a Man to Heaven, without the trouble of the true *inward Devotion* of the Soul: He may repent without *Contrition*; may fast with a full Meal: Nay, and if the Pope pleases, (c) may obtain a *plenary remission* of his Sins, *se ancho non fosse confessore contrito*; though he has neither *confess'd* them to any Priest, nor finds in his own Heart any manner of *Contrition* for them.

(c) This Passage is so very Extraordinary, that I ought to give some Account of it.

Pope Boniface IX. having granted a large *Indulgence* at Rome, whither the Lombards, by reason of the Wars they then had, could not go to gain it, at the Prayer of John Galeas, Viscount of Milan, he grants the same *Indulgence* to Milan he had done at Rome, viz. that all the Subjects of the said Galeas, though they had neither *confess'd* their Sins, nor were *contrite* for them, should yet be *absolved* of all their Sins; only for *visiting* a few Churches, and paying the Sum of Money prefix'd by the said Bull: Bonifacio Pontifice à intercession de Giovan Galeazzo Visconte la concessa in Milano (sc. la indulgenza) nella medesima forma ch' era à Roma: cioè, che ciascuno nel Dominio del Visconte, se ancho non fosse Contrito ne Confesso, fosse assoluto di ogni peccato, &c. Corio Hist. Milan. terza parte, pag. 629. Edit. Venet. anno 1565.

I shall not need to say how many
 (d) *new ways of Salvation* of this kind they (d) Dr. Brevint's Saul
 have found out; by wearing *Leathern* and Samael
Girdles about their Loins, or *Scapularies* at Endor.
 over their *Shoulders*; by *lifting* them- Crasset de-
 selves into such or such *certain Frater-* votion ve-
nities; by *dress*ing of *Altars*, and going ritabile en-
 on *Pilgrimages*; by *Holy Water*, and vers la Ste.
Agnus Dei's: And all which, and infi- Virge,
 nite more of the like kind, if, as our part. ult.
 late Masters tell us, they are not Au-
 thorized by their Church, yet I am sure
 are publickly recommended by their
Greatest Men, and generally practised
 too, without any censure or contra-
 diction among them. This is cer-
 tain, that all these, and whatever Ar-
 tifices of the like kind, Men may please
 either to flatter themselves, or to delude
 others withal, without a true *Contrition*,
 and a serious *Reformation*, they are all
 but Vanity; they make a *shew of Piety*
 in the *Eyes of Men*, but they avail no-
 thing to our *forgiveness* with God.

I will not now dispute of what use
 some of these *External Performances*
 may be to assist our *Repentance*, and
 render our *Sorrow* for Sin the more
solemn, and so in *some Cases*, as I have
 before observed, the more *pleasing* to

God. I know well enough that St. Paul
 1 Tim. iv. 8. has told us, That *Bodily Exercise*, where
 'tis discreetly order'd, does *profit a little*,
 though it be not like *Godliness*, *profitable*
for all things. But then as 'tis plain,
 that the greatest part of those Follies
 so much magnified and recommended
 in the *Church of Rome*, are but vain and
 ridiculous Impositions to cheat the silly
 and superstitious Multitude; so 'tis cer-
 tain, that the best of these things are
 neither in themselves *Meritorious*, much
 less *Satisfactory* for *Sins*, as they pretend
 them to be; nor otherwise of any value
 at all with God, than as they are at-
 tended with that *true Repentance*, which
 alone can either incline his Mercy, or
 obtain our Forgiveness.

If we will therefore make our solemn
 (e) Νηστει- (e) *Humiliation* this day acceptable to
 αυτος ὁ Θεός- God, and available to our *selves*, our
 τῶν λέγων Country, and our *Religion*, we must
 τῶν ἑκείνων take the *Method* of the *Prophet* in our
 πολλῶν, Text: We must *turn unto the Lord*
 ἀλλὰ τῶν our God with all our *Heart*, and then
 ἀκριβῶς ἐν- our *fasting*, and our *weeping*, and our
 στείαν, ὁ mourning shall indeed be pleasing unto
 τῶν ἑκείνων him. We must *renew our Hearts*, and
 βραχυτάτων ἀποχλῶ
 μένον, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἑκείνων ὁμαρτυρούμεν. Chryl. Hom. ad Antioch. 3.

not, i. e. rather than *our Garments*; must humble our *Souls* first, and then the violence we do our *Bodies* will be consider'd by him.

When *Jonah* denounced God's Judgments against *Niniveh*, we read in his 3d. Chapter. *That the People of Niniveh believed, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even unto the least.* (f) But was this (f) ἄλλ' therefore that *Repentance* for which he ἰδοὺ τὸ spared them? No, it is not so much as ποτε ὅτι τὸ once mentioned among the Reasons of λῦσαν τὴν it. It was the *Reformation of their Lives* ἀπερίτη- that tied up his Hand, and sheathed τον ἐκεί- his Sword, ver. 10. *And God saw their νων ὁρ- Works, that they turn'd from their Evil γων; ἀεὶ ἡ νηστεία way; and God repented of the Evil that μόνον καὶ ὁ he said he would do unto them, and he σάκευ; did it not.* ἔκιν' ἔστιν

ἀλλ' ἡ παύσις τῆς βίης μεταβολὴ πόθεν ἔστω δῆλον; ἀπ' αὐτῶν οὗ περιποιησὶν ῥημάτων, &c. ———— ὅρατε ὅτι ἔχ' ἡ νηστεία ἐξήρπασεν τὴν κινδύν, ἀλλ' ἡ μεταβολὴ τῆς βίης ὁ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν τοῖς βαρβάρους καὶ ἑυμανῇ, &c. Chryl ad Antioch. Hom. 3.

2. And this brings me to a second Remark for the farther clearing of this great Duty, viz. That not only these outward marks of penitence are not suffi-

cient to the discharge of it, but though we should to these add a *true and real sorrow of heart* for the Sins we have committed, even this would not be sufficient to purchase our Forgiveness.

Now by *true sorrow*, I do not mean that little *imperfect sorrow*, which looks rather to the danger of our Condition, than to the heinousness of our Offences; and bewails our Transgressions more out of an apprehension of those Judgments that may be the Consequence of them, than out of any real regret that we have sinned against a most Gracious and Merciful God. For however those of the other *Communion*, out of their great tenderness to Sinners, have declared such a *sorrow* as this, if accompanied with *Confession*, to be sufficient

*Conc.Tr.
Sess. xiv.
cap. 4.

* to dispose Men to obtain the *Grace of God* by the *Sacrament of Penance*: and therefore have resolved, that *true*

† Layman
Theol.Mo-
ral. lib. 5.
tract. 6. c. 2.
§. 2.

† *Contrition*, or a *sorrow for sin committed, with a purpose of sinning no more, is not necessary to the Sacrament of Penance, after the Commission of mortal*

And so most of their other Casuists, *Morinus, Greg. de Valentia, Siles, &c.*

Sin,

Sin, but that Attrition is sufficient, though a Man knows it to be no more: Yet I suppose it needless in this place to obviate any such gross Error, however otherwise of very great danger, in the Practice of this Duty. Be the sorrow for sin never so sincere; and our Resolutions thereupon no more to return to the Commission of it never so firm and well grounded, yet if instead of making good these Resolutions we shall stop here, we are but half Penitents; seeing we yet want that change of life, which alone is able to compleat the Nature, and render the Practice of our Repentance acceptable unto God, and available to our Forgiveness.

3. In short, *Thirdly*, if we will truly discharge that *Repentance*, to which we are here called, we must do it not by being *sorry* for our *Sins*, or by *resolving* against them, but by an effectual *forsaking* of them; i. e. as our *Text* speaks, *By turning unto the Lord our God.* This is that which alone can implore his Favour, and commend us to his Mercy. And this was what

The Ninth Sermon.

I before observed, in the Case of *Nineveh*: When God saw their works, that they turned from their *Evil way*, then he repented him of the *Evil* that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not.

Nay, but it is not any turning unto God, that will suffice neither: We

* *Veraciter*,
integrali-
ter. Lyr.
Marcer.
 † *Revera*,
Ex animo,
non simula-
te. Druf.
serio ac bona
fide. Grot.

must *sorrow* * even unto him, and with all our † *Heart*: Words very *Emphatical*, and which offer to us two great *Conditions*, which are absolutely necessary to render our *Conversion* every way such as it ought to be. *First*, That it must be *hearty* and *sincere*: There must be nothing of the *Hypocrite* mix'd with it; our Souls must go along with our outward Performances; and these *penitential appearances* be the true Declarations of that *real, inward sorrow*, which we feel in our Hearts for our Offences. For God is not a *Man*, that he should be *mocked*. He sees into our very Souls, and knows the *secrets* of all the Children of *Men*. And *Secondly*, That it must be *intire*, and *without reserve*: As we must be *sorry* for every *Sin* we have already committed, so we must resolve against
 ever

Psal. xliv.
21.
1 Chron.
xxviii. 9.
Rom. viii.
27.

ever committing any for the time to come; For God is of purer Eyes than Hab. i. 13. to behold the least Iniquity; and if our Repentance be sincere, so shall we be too. The same Piety which moves us to hate any Evil, will equally fill us with an Aversion against all. And if we desire to continue but in one Offence, it is because that we do truly repent of none.

So that now then if we will answer the design of *this day*; if we will render our Fast such as the Lord has chosen, and has promised to reward with the Blessings both of *this life*, and of that which is to come, we must not think it enough that we comply with the outward Ceremonies and shew of Repentance, but we must indeed resolve to bring forth the Fruits of it. Whilst we address our selves to God for Pardon, we must take heed to dispose our Souls in such a manner, that we may be fit to receive it.

And if we thus improve the great Solemnity of *this day*, we shall not fail to meet with a favourable acceptance at the Throne of Grace. God will be Joel ii. 18. jealous for his land, and pity his People: He will perfect the great Deliverance
he

Deut. ii. 25. he has begun for us, and once more render us the fear and the terror of all our Enemies round about us. Our *Faith*, which has so often triumph'd over all the Arguments of its Adversaries, shall now no less triumph over all their black Designs to root it out, and to destroy it; and shew to all the World, that though for our Tryal God may sometimes permit the *Winds to blow, and the Floods to rise, and the Storms to beat against our Church*, yet has he founded it on that *Rock* that shall never fail; Nor shall the gates of Hell, either the Power of *France*, or the Cunning of the *Jesuit*, or the Malice of *Both*, ever be able to prevail against it.

Math. xvi.
18.

And this brings me to the other thing I am to speak to: Our *Encouragement* to this *Duty*.

II. *For God is Gracious and Merciful, slow to anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.*

It is not at all needful for me to enter on any particular *Explication* of all these *Attributes*, and shew what *Arguments* every one of them affords to engage us to *Repentance*. Two things
in

in general there are, which will at first sight arise from them to excite us to it; viz.

First, The Goodness and Mercy of God to the greatest Sinners upon their Repentance: God is Gracious and Merciful, and of great Kindness.

Secondly, His unwillingness to pronounce any Judgments at all against them, and his readiness to recal them, if they repent:

He is slow to Anger, and repenteth him of the Evil.

And First, Of the Goodness and Mercy of God to the Greatest of Sinners upon their Repentance:

He is Gracious and Merciful, and of great Kindness.

When God proclaimed his own Name in the midst of the People of Israel, we read *Exod. xxxiv.* that he chose to do it, not so much in the terrible Attributes of his Majesty and Power, as in the soft Ideas of his Mercy and Goodness: *The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful*

Exodus
xxxiv. 6, 7.

Merciful and Gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth; keeping Mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. And if we look into all the following Representations which he makes of himself, whether by his Holy Prophets under the Legal, but especially by our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles under the Christian Dispensation, we shall find there is no Character he so much delights in, as this of being Good and Gracious, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance,
2 Pet. iii. 9.

And now what more forcible Encouragement can any one desire to bring him to Repentance, than to be thus assured of the Goodness and Mercy of God to the greatest of Sinners, if they Repent? That he will not only forgive him upon his return, but will even assist him with Grace and Strength in the doing of it. That he desires not the death of the most profligate Offender, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. In a word, That he has promised forgiveness, without exception, to the most wicked Men upon their Repentance; so that if they will

will but yet break off their evil Course, and keep his Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, they shall surely live, they shall not die, Ezek. xviii. 21.

Many are the ways, and excellent the Methods that God has taken to convince us of his Mercy, and the time would fail me to enter on a particular Consideration of them.

Sometimes he declares not only that he is ready to pardon us if we repent, but that he even desires we should repent, that he may forgive us. And lest his Word should not be sufficient, he confirms that desire with an Oath, Ezek xxxiii. 11. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O House of Israel?

Sometimes he Expostulates with us in the way of Reasoning, to see if by that means he may be able to bring us to consider his Love and Affection to us, Isai. i. 16. Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though
304r

Isai. i. 18. *your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.*

If he Exhorts us to Repentance, he always does it upon this Promise, That he will Pardon us, if we repent.

Ezek. xviii. *we turn from our Sins, Iniquity shall not be our ruine.*

If he threatens Judgments, yet still he keeps a reserve for Mercy to triumph over Judgment; and will rather be thought inconstant in his most peremptory Decrees, than inexorable to Repenting Sinners. Thus he commanded Jonah to go to Niniveh, and to pronounce an utter Destruction against it.

Jonah iii. *He fix'd the very time too, Yet forty days, and Niniveh shall be overthrown.* But what now was the issue of all this? Were they utterly destroy'd, according to this Prophecy? Nay, but on the contrary, God was yet intreated for them; and spar'd them. So we read, ver. 10. *the City believed, and feared God, and turn'd from their Evil way: And God repented of the Evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not, Jonah 3.*

And

And what must the Consequence of all these *Reflections* be, but to engage us not to despise the Goodness of God, whereby he thus graciously invites us to *Repentance*; but to conclude with Holy *David*, Psal. cxxx. 3. *If thou, LORD, shouldst be extream to mark what is done amiss; O God, who may abide it? But there is Mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared.*

And what I have now said of *God's* mercy in General, will yet more hold in the other Part of this *Character*, wherein is set out to us in Particular,

Secondly, His great unwillingness to pronounce any *Judgments* at all against *Sinners*, and his readiness to recall them upon their *Repentance*:

He is slow to Anger, and repenteth him of the Evil.

And because I would now, were I able, speak not so much to your *Reason*, as to your *Sense* and *Experience*, to your *Consciences* and *Affections*; I will for the Proof of this, no more lead you back to the *Israelites* in this *Prophecy*; to *Past-times*, and unknown *Countries*; but will rather desire

Y

you

you to consider your own *Times*, your own *Country*, and, if you will allow me freely to add it, your own *Souls*: Which of all these will not afford me an *evident Demonstration* of the *Patience* and *long-suffering* of God? And speak him in the words of the *Text*, to be a *God slow to Anger, and that repenteth him of the Evil?*

That after so many *Sins*, as we have every one, the very best of us, *committed*, we are yet alive this day; whereas God might, if he had pleased, long since have cut us off in the *midst* of our *Sins*: That after so many calls and invitations as he has sent to bring us to *Repentance*, he is still pleased to call and to invite us to it: That notwithstanding we have so far abused his *Goodness* and *long-suffering*, as to improve that which above all things should have the most engaged us to our Duty, into an encouragement to go on the rather in our *Sins*; he nevertheless still continues to us the Offers of *Pardon and Peace*, if we will even now in this our day consider the things that make for our *Peace*: What is all this but a most Demonstrative, as well as a most Affectionate Proof, that God

is indeed *slow to anger, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance?*

That he has deliver'd us out of so many dangers, in which, but for his *Providence* over us, we must long since have perish'd: That he has smitten us in *Mercy*, and not in Judgment; to correct and admonish, not to ruine and destroy us: That upon our deprecating his Anger, he has at any time heard our Prayers, and answer'd our Desires: What is this but a plain Evidence, *that he smites not willingly,* Lam. iii. *nor loves to afflict the Children of Men:* 33. and so is a God *repenting him of the Evil* that he is at any time forced either to *threaten* us with, or to *bring upon us*.

And if we look into his Dispensations towards us in the common concern of our Country, and our Religion; How *slow* must that God have been to *Anger*, who after so many years Attendance, nevertheless still calls upon us, as at *this day*, to *turn from our Evil* Ezek. xviii *way, and from the violence that is in our* 30. *Hands, that our Iniquity may not be our ruine?*

The Ninth Sermon.

And for his *repenting him of the Evil*, which we have sometimes forced him by our continual Provocations to send upon us: Let the *Instances* which we our selves have known, suffice to tell us, how unwilling he has shewn himself to bring us to an utter desolation.

When it pleased God for our iniquities, *to despise, in his indignation, both the King and the Priest*; and by the deplorable Judgment of *Civil Confusions*, had proved and exercised us about Twenty Years; with what a Miracle of Mercy did *he turn again the Captivity of our Sion*, and restore to us both our *Government and Religion*, as before?

Lam. ii. 6.
Psal. cxxvi.
1.

When this would not do, but our *Sins* and our *Prosperity* return'd together; so that we were again in a very few years become *ripe for Judgment*; He called forth a *destroying Angel*; He put a new Sword into his Hand, and commanded him to slay his *Thousands, and Ten Thousands in our Streets*. The PLAGUE consum'd our Strength; and hardly was that pass'd, when another Vengeance, a *devouring FIRE*, such as scarce any Age or Country has ever heard

heard of, burnt down our Dwellings. And had not the Hand of God wonderfully interposed, *we must have been* Isai. i. 9. *as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrha.*

And yet how did he then cover us with his Hand in that day of his displeasure? He neither suffer'd our Enemies to invade us from abroad, nor any Domestick Quarrels to embroil us at home. He preserved us in Peace; he sent again the Blessings of Plenty and Prosperity among us, and our City is risen more Great and Glorious out of its Ashes.

What shall I say to the *fears* and *jealousies* we have labour'd under since, from a restless Party, Enemies to the Name of *Protestant*, and by *Principle* conjured, if they can, to root it out of the World?

In how many *dangers* has God delivered us? And how many Designs, for ought we know, may he have prevented, which have not yet been brought to light? And when at last, either to awaken us the more effectually to a *Repentance* of our *Sins*, or it may be to accomplish the number of their *Iniquities*, he deliver'd us over for a little

while into the Hands of our Enemies ; and to convince the most incredulous among us, what the true *Spirit of prevailing Popery* is, suffer'd them with such an inconsiderate Fury to pursue our Ruine, That no Ties , either of God or Man, were sufficient to restrain them ; but all Obligations, whether of *Justice* or *Conscience*, were equally trampled under their feet ; How did it then please our *Almighty Defender* to assert his *Character* of being a God *repenting him of the evil* that he had brought upon us, in a manner that is the *Wonder* and *Astonishment* of the present ; and, that I am perswaded, shall be the *Praise* and *Triumph* of his *Church* in all succeeding *Generations* ?

He raised us up a *Deliverer* out of the *House of his Servant David*. He touch'd his *Princely* Heart with a generous Sense both of the Evils which we had suffer'd , and of the greater that we apprehended. His *Honour* and his *Zeal* enflamed him to do somewhat worthy Himself ; and that might answer the mighty Hopes God had prepared us to conceive of Him. He meditated the great Work of delivering our *Country* from *Oppression*, and our *Religion* from *Destruction*.

Destruction. And by the Blessing of God, he accomplish'd it, in a manner so extraordinary in all its Circumstances, as, I think, should not suffer us to doubt from whose Providence it was, that this *Redemption* was sent to us. *This was the Lord's doing, and, whatever it is, I am sure ought to be, marvellous in our Eyes:* And may, I think, be a *final*, I hope it shall be an *effectual* Confirmation to us of this Great Engagement of our Text, to *turn to him with all our hearts; viz.* That he is a God *repenting him of the evil;* and therefore whose *Mercy*, if we now truly do so, we may securely depend upon both for the *forgiveness* of our *sins*, and for our *deliverance* from those *dangers* which our *sins* have so justly exposed us to.

And now what remains, but that having all these great Encouragements, such *Promises*, or rather, such an *Earnest* of God's Favour to us, we resolve, every of one of us, seriously to comply with the great Design both of this *Day*, and of this *Discourse*; and by our sincere *Repentance* for our past Offences, obtain that Blessing we so much desire both for our *Country*, and for our *Religion*,

Never was there a *time* wherein we had greater Reason to hope for God's Acceptance than at this Day; and such an *Occasion* as this, to implore his Favour, there may not perhaps again occur in the Course of many Ages.

For indeed, what is it that we are now assembled to recommend to His Mercy, but in Effect the preservation of our *Selves*, our *Laws*, our *Liberties*, and our *Religion*, against the Violence of those who have long conspired both *Their* and *Our* Destruction.

That he would *preside* in our *Councils*, and *go forth with our Armies*; and so direct the one, and prosper the other, that we may again enjoy the *Blessings* of Peace and *Security*; that there *may*
 Psal. cxliv. *be no decay, no leading into Captivity,*
 14. *and no just complaining in our Streets.*

And this he will do, if we be not our selves wanting to our own Preservation. Only let us act as becomes *Good Christians*, and *True Englishmen*; let us do all things for the Glory of God, and for the Safety, Honour and Welfare of our Country: In the words of *Joab* to his Brother *Abishai*, upon an Occasion not much different from our own at this time; *Let us be strong, and of good*

good Courage, and let us play the Men ^{2 Sam. x,}
for our People, and for the Cities of our ^{12.}
God; and then he will not fail us, nor
forsake us.

But if instead of pursuing the things
that make for our Peace, we shall still
go on to precipitate our own Destru-
ction: If when we are call'd this Day
to turn unto the LORD our God with
all our hearts, and with fasting, and with
weeping, and with mourning; we shall
instead thereof fast only for strife and ^{Isai. lviii. 4.}
for debate: If when we should be here
prostrating our selves before the LORD,
to implore the Completion of that
Great Deliverance he has begun to
work for us; we shall, on the con-
trary, continue ungratefully to mur-
mur against his Providence, and be
ready almost to implead his Justice for
what he has already done; and with
those repining *Israelites* of old, be look-
ing back again to our *Egyptian Bon-*
dage, when we are brought even within
prospect of the *Promised Land*: In a
word, If when we should be uniting
our selves against the *Common Enemy*
of our *Country* and *Christendom*, we
shall suffer a *Spirit of Faction* and *Se-*
dition, of *Mutiny* and *Discontent*; of
private

private Interests, and unseasonable Resentments, to distract our Councils, and divide us against one another; What can we then expect, but that God should at last give us over into the hands of our Enemies, and *make those that hate us, to rule over us.*

Wherefore now, arise O ye *Worthies, ye Chosen, and Counsellors* of our *Israel*; Consult, consider, and resolve: And may the God of Heaven; the God before whom we are here assembled this Day; He who *has, and does,* and we trust *will* still deliver us; our *Rock*, and our *Defence* against the Face of our Enemies, so direct and prosper all your Consultations, that the Children which are yet unborn, may rise up in their Generations, and call you *Blessed*; when they shall enjoy the Benefits of that Peace, and Security, which we trust shall descend to them, through your Wise and Vigorous Resolutions.

Behold this day the Eyes not of your own *Nation* only, but of all the *Nations* round about us, fix'd upon you: The Fortunes, I do not say, of every single Person among you, tho' that were somewhat; nor yet of your own Country and Religion only, which ought to be
much

much more valued ; but what is still more considerable than all this, the Fortunes of all the *Reformed Churches*, and *distressed Countries* of *Europe*, depending on the Success of our present Enterprizes. This is the fatal *Crisis*, that must secure or ruine both them and us for ever.

May the Consideration of all these things, inspire every one of you with a *Spirit* suitable both to our present Needs, and to that great trust that is here committed to you : A *Spirit* of *Wisdom* and *Understanding* ; a *Spirit* of *Prudence* and *Discretion* ; a *Spirit* of *Charity* and *Moderation* ; but above all, with a *Spirit* of *Piety* and *Unity* ; that being endu'd with all these excellent Qualities, ye may become the *Repairers* of our *Breaches* ; the *Restorers* of our almost lost and trampled *Liberties* ; the *Defenders* of our *Faith* ; the *Support* of your *Country* ; the *Avenge*rs of your barbarously abus'd *Allies* ; the *Scourge* and *Terror* of the *Universal Enemy* of *Truth*. *Peace*, *Religion*, *Nature* : In short, of all the *common Laws* and *Rights* both of *God*, and of all *Mankind*.

May your *Councils* be govern'd with such a Calmness and Temper, as may settle and compose all the unquiet and dissatisfied

disatisfied Spirits (if there be any) yet remaining among us ; and suffer none to regret our wonderful Preservation, but those only whose *fury* had once prompted them to attempt, and whose *Principles* still carry them on, to desire, even when they are not able to accomplish, our Destruction.

May your *Resolutions* be as *speedy*, as the *publick Necessities* are *pressing* ; and their *Execution* be accompanied with a *Fidelity* and *Success* that may equal not only our Expectation, but even our very Hopes and our Desires.

And for the obtaining of all these *Blessings*, and whatever else may serve to make these *Kingdoms* Happy :

May we all this day, *fast* the *fast*
Isa. lvi. 6. *which the Lord has chosen ; to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the Oppressed go free.*

Psal. 38. 18. *Let us confess our wickedness, and be sorry for our sins.*

Joel ii. 13. *Let us turn to the LORD our God with all our heart ; and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.*

Isa. lvi. 7. *Let us deal our Bread to the Hungry, and bring the Poor to our Houses.*

— V. 8. *So shall we call, and the Lord shall answer ; we shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am.*

The Ninth Sermon.

333

am. Our light shall break forth as the Morning, and our righteousness as the Noon-day. Isa. lviii. 9.

God shall come, and shall not keep silence : Psal. I. 3.
He shall save us from our Enemies, and put them to shame that hate us. Psal. xlv. 7.

He shall arise, and all our Adversaries shall be scatter'd ; they also that hate us, shall flee before us ; Like as the smok vanisbeth, so shall we drive them away ; Psal. lxviii. 1,
terror and dread shall fall upon them. Exod. xv. 2. 16.

Thus shall all our Mourning be turned into Laughter, and our Heaviness into Joy ; and we shall yet sing the Song of Moses, and of the Lamb, when he shall have given us rest from all our Enemies round about us ;

Salvation and Glory, and Power, and Praise, and Thanksgiving, be to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for Ever and Ever, Amen.

OF
 Contending Earnestly for the Faith

Which was once delivered to

The SAINTS.

A

SERMON

Preached at

MERCERS-CHAPEL,

January 8. 1682.

JUDE iii.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the Common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints.

IT is generally agreed by Learned Men, that this *Epistle* was written by St. *Jude* upon the same Occasion, and to the same Persons to whom St. *Peter* had not long before address'd his *Second*; whose Thoughts he

he pursues, and whose very Words he seems in some places to have transcribed. And the Subject and Design of both we have here express'd to us in the words of my *Text*; viz. to exhort the *Christians* dispersed abroad among the *Jews*, neither to sink under those *Persecutions* that were brought upon them for their *Faith*; nor to suffer that holy *Doctrine* which had been so fully and purely deliver'd to them by the *Apostles*, to be corrupted by the Errors of those pernicious *Hereticks*, who even already began to creep in among them.

Great was the danger of these *Christians*, and great the concern of our *Apostle* for them. To persevere constantly in the *Faith*, at a time when the severest Tryals were made use of to affright them from it; and to preserve it in its Purity, when so many subtile *Hereticks* made it their whole business, by any means, to corrupt the Truth of it. And no wonder if St. *Jude* thought it not only becoming that *Character* our Blessed Lord had honour'd him with in his Church, to write unto them, but even necessary for him so to do; and to exhort them,

ἀπαγωνίζεσθαι,

ἐπαγροίζεσθαι, to strive with all their might, and, as our *Translation* has very well rendred it, *To contend earnestly for the Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints.*

For the due prosecution of which words, as they lye before us in the *Context*, I shall consider these Four things.

I. What that *Faith* is, which the *Apostle* exhorted them to *contend* for?

II. How they were to *contend* for it?

III. The great reason they had at that time more especially so to do.

IV. By what means he advised them to *contend* for it; that so they might secure their *Faith* in those dangerous times.

I. What that *Faith* is which the *Apostle* here exhorted them to *contend* for?

Now this the *Character* here given of it in our *Text*, will clearly shew. 'Tis the *Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints.* That *Faith* which the Holy *Apostles* had *once for all* instructed them in, and which therefore both they and all succeeding *Ages* in the *Church* were both faithfully to retain, and *earnestly to contend for* for ever.

Z

So

So that here then we have a plain account, what the true *Christian Faith* we are to profess, is, and where we are to seek it? 'Tis not the *Faith* of this or that *Church* or *Party*; 'Tis not the *Faith* of this or that *Country* or *Century*. Let Men and Times make what Changes and Alterations they please in it: *The Faith that was once delivered to the Saints*, is what we are to contend for, not for any *Inventions* or *Additions* of Men that have since been brought into it.

I shall not need to tell you whither you are to go for this *Faith*: The *Spirit of God*, by providing us a *rule* of it; and *assisting* and *directing* those holy Men who first *preach'd the Gospel* to the *Saints* that then lived, to send it down in writing to all the other Disciples that were to follow after to the end of the World; has sufficiently directed us both whither we are to go for it, and indeed where it is that we can alone be sure to find it. And however Interest has made some of late the better to defend their *Errors*, and to maintain an usurped *Authority* over Mens *Consciences* to pretend to some other *Directions*: Yet since it is confess'd,

feld, that the Holy Scriptures were written for that very purpose, that they might be the Rule of our Faith; and St. Paul has expressly told us, *That they* ^{2 Tim. iii.} *are able to make the Man of God wise* ^{15.} *unto Salvation, and thoroughly furnished to every good work*; we shall have little reason to seek to any other Rule, till some good Account can be given why this is not sufficient; or by what Authority it is that they pretend to impose any other of their own inventing upon us; and who gave them this Authority?

But however, be the Rule of this Faith what it will, that is not my business at present to dispute. Let it only be resolved, that the Faith it self must be no other than what was *once delivered to the Saints*, and then I am sure it will be our duty not only readily to receive it, but *earnestly to contend for it*, be the means of its conveyance what they will.

This is the next thing to be considered by us;

II. How we are to contend for this Faith?

Z 2

And

And here if the Question be concerning the *manner* of the *Contention*, I have already observed, that the Original Expression is very emphatical; and implies a great vigour and *earnestness* in the doing of it. To teach us with what zeal we ought to adhere to the *Truth*, and defend it against all such as would endeavour either to fright, or to seduce us from it.

Indeed, whosoever shall consider the great value of that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*; and what our concern is in the preserving of it; will be forced to confess, that we can never be too *earnest* in our *contending* for it.

Truth is in all things so worthy and desirable, that a generous Spirit will think he can never prize it enough. We see the greatest Men have made it the whole business of their Lives to pursue it even in the smallest instances; and have thought their labours worthily rewarded, if with the greatest Application, and it may be with some danger and loss too, they have but been able to find it out at the last. Much more certainly ought that *Truth*, which the *Son of God* himself came down from Heaven to discover; and which,
had

had he not revealed it to us, it would have been impossible for us ever to have come to the knowledge of it, to be most dear to us, and not upon any account to be forsaken by us.

But when to this we shall add, That these *Truths* are not matters of meer *Speculation*, only to employ the Mind, and exercise the Soul in the Contemplation of them: That the concern here is not a useless *Theoreme*; which whether we believe or not, we are neither at all the worse now, nor shall be ever the less happy hereafter; but such by our keeping or betraying whereof, we shall finally be Happy or Miserable for ever: That therefore to give up these *Truths*, is to become the vilest *Traditors*, the Betrayers not only of our *Religion*, but of our *Souls* too, and that to all *Eternity*; we cannot certainly but think it to be very much our concern to take the *advice* of the *Apostle*, and earnestly contend for the Faith that was once delivered to the *Saints*.

Such is the necessity of this *Contention*: And two things there were wherein St. Jude here exhorted them to the Practice of it, proportionable to the two great dangers to which I have before

said these *Christians* were then exposed.

For, *First*; The *Christians* to whom he wrote, were at this time actually under a *Persecution* for their *Faith*, and by consequence under great *Temptations* to *Apostatize* from it. And this danger was by so much the more to be apprehended, for that a sort of *Hereticks* were crept in among them, who the better to preserve themselves from those Evils which *Christianity* then brought upon all the faithful Professors of it, had among their other *Errors*, set up this for one, That it was lawful in such Tryals to dissemble their *Faith*, and to escape *Persecution* for it.

Now in Opposition to this base Cowardise of these Men, we must first interpret the *Contention* here spoken of to imply a firmness and resolution of Mind to undergo any Evils, rather than to *deny their Religion*: That they should not, like those vile *Hereticks*, seek by unworthy Compliances to preserve themselves from danger, and ruine their Souls in the *other World*, to save their Lives, and to preserve the little Interests of this.

And

And the same should be the resolution of every good Christian now. *Persecution* ought to be so far from affrighting him from his *Faith*, that he ought then most firmly to adhere to it, when he sees others the most violent in opposing it. What tho' he should be called to suffer for it? *Death* ought never to amaze that Man, who is able to look forward into *Heaven* beyond it; and there see that *Crown of Glory* which these *light afflictions* that are but for a moment shall place upon his Head for all *Eternity*. A true *Christian* is never greater, than when he is under the *Cross*: Nor can any thing be more glorious to the Faithful Disciple, than to follow his dear *Master*, not only in Well-doing, but, if the Will of God be so, in patient *Suffering* too.

What shall separate us from the love Rom. viii. of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, ³⁵ or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, — ³⁶ For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter:) Nay, in all these things we are more than — ³⁷ Conquerors, through him that loved us.

But, *Secondly* ; This was not the only danger they were then likely to run, nor it may be the greatest. And the hazard of corrupting their Religion, by the Artifices of those *Hereticks* who were unawares crept in among them, was yet more to be apprehended than their total *Apostatizing* from it. And therefore St. Jude here exhorts them, *to contend earnestly for the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints* ; i. e. to be very wary and circumspect to maintain it in that purity in which they had received it, and not suffer any little Sophistry or Insinuations of their Enemies, to lead them into any Errors contrary to the truth of it.

And indeed, whosoever shall look into the *Annals* of the Church, will find this to have ever been the more fatal danger of the two : And that the Devil has in all Ages gain'd more by the secret cunning of his *false Teachers*, than by the open violence of his *Persecutors*. There's many a *Christian* who has carriage enough to Die for his *Faith*, that yet has not Skill enough to *defend* it. And those whose business it is to deceive, never fail to
set

set most upon such as they think are the least able to do so. And therefore it cannot certainly but be very advisable in us all, and especially for those who are the most ignorant, to be very careful of themselves as to this matter: Not to hearken to every little Pretender that will but undertake to lead them; but if any such offers himself to them, to draw them away from the right Faith, either absolutely to reject him, or rather to bring him forth unto the light; to refer him to their *Teachers*, who instruct them in the *Truth*, and who are therefore the fittest to defend the Interests of it. And so maintain that wise indifference which ought to be the resolution of every good Man in the search of all, but especially of *divine Truth*; neither obstinately to refuse a better Instruction whenever it shall indeed be offered to him, much less to be cheated out of his Religion by Noise and Confidence, by high Pretences, and no Arguments; and so by his easiness, betray that Faith which our *Apostle* here calls us so earnestly to contend for.

And

And this is a *Caution* that cannot be unseasonable at any time. But yet some times there are wherein 'tis more especially to be recommended to Christians. And such was that wherein St. *Jude* wrote this *Epistle*; Which therefore brings me to my next Point,

III. Of the reason which the *Christians* at that time had more especially thus to contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the *Saints*.

I shall not now say any thing of that general Obligation which lyes upon all *Christians* thus to contend for the Faith, viz. the *Eternal Salvation* of their *Souls*, according as they are careful or not in so doing, though this ought certainly to have always its weight too with us, both because I have already said somewhat to this before, and because I am now only to consider the particular Reasons which those to whom St. *Jude* here wrote, had at that time so to do. And those, whethersoever of the two things we consider, which I have before shewn they were herein exhorted to, are such as
ought

ought very much to have engaged their
care in this Contention. For,

First, As to the renouncing of their
Faith.

They were actually under a Persecu-
tion for it. Their Interests, their Ease,
their Inclinations, all solicited them so
to do. And as if all this were not
enough, some who called themselves
Christians among them, not only en-
couraged them by their *Example*, but
even maintain'd it as an *Opinion*, That
to avoid Persecution, they might law-
fully and warrantably dissemble their
Belief. And sure then it was high
time for the *Apostle* to interpose his
Exhortation, to stir them up to contend
for that Faith which both their *Enemies*
persecuted, and their pretended *Catholick*
Brethren so readily renounced. To
press them with such Arguments, as
both their present Circumstances, and
past Prophecies offer'd to him to con-
firm them in it; and which ought to
have been of much greater weight with
them to keep them in the right way,
than the scandalous *Examples* and Do-
ctrine of their Adversaries to draw them
out

out of it. Now two Considerations there were, which some suppose the *Apostle* to have here offer'd to them for this purpose.

1. The nearness of their *Deliverance*; which according to our *Saviour's Promises*, must now be, as indeed it afterwards proved, very nigh at hand.

This is what the learned Dr. *Hammond* understood to have been signified by that Phrase of the *Text*; where the *Apostle* says, he thought it necessary to write unto them, *Of the common Salvation*; i.e. (says *he) of that *special Promise of Christ to preserve and deliver those who should firmly adhere to him*, from that *Universal Destruction*, which was in a little time to befall the *Jews*.

* See Dr. Hammond's Par. upon this Verse, and Note on Rom. xiii. c.

Many were the Denuntiatiions of our Blessed Lord against the *Jews* in his Gospel. The Calamities he foretold were great, and the time of their accomplishment nigh at hand. That *Generation*, which then lived, was not to pass away till all should be fulfilled. But for those among them who should embrace and keep firm to his Religion, they

they were to be secured in the midst of this Desolation. So *Mat. x. 22.* where speaking of those very Persecutions which *St. Jude* here refers to, he tells them, *But he that endures to the end, shall be saved.* Shall be saved, not only in another World, though that be certain too; but by a remarkable deliverance even in this. And accordingly *St. Peter*, who wrote much about the same time that *St. Jude* did; and concerning the very same things, exemplifies this Deliverance in that remarkable Preservation of *Noah* and his Family, when the whole World besides perished in the Deluge, *2 Pet. ii. 5.* Of righteous *Lot* and his Children, who were brought by an *Angel* out of *Sodom*, when the wicked *Sodomites* were destroyed, *ver. 6, 7.* And then makes this remarkable Application, *ver. 9.* *The Lord*, says he, *knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.*

Now if this be allowed of as the true meaning of this *Phrase*, then certainly it could not but be a great engagement to them to continue constant in their Profession: To consider, that they had but a little while remaining, and their Deliverance should be accomplish'd,

* See Dr.
Hammond,
Mat. x. b.
Rom. xiii. c.

Rom. xiii.

11.

Rom. xiii.

12.

plish'd: That, as St. Paul phrases it, *their Salvation was now nearer, than when they believed. The night was far spent, the day was at hand*: And therefore how unworthy, indeed how weak a thing would it be for them, after all they had hitherto suffered for the Faith, now finally to *apostatize* from it, when they were just ready to be delivered out of all their Dangers.

But this is not all the force of this Argument, St. Jude presses it yet farther; for that,

2. Such an *Apostasy* would not only not secure them, but would most certainly involve them in that very Destruction which they sought to escape by it.

And of this the *Examples* which our *Apostle* subjoins, are an evident Proof; and that Destruction which accordingly did involve the Complying *Hereticks* with the Unbelieving *Jews*, became a terrible Application. Our Blessed Lord, who provided for the Security of the Constant *Christians*, leaying the rest, as he had declared he would, *to lose their Souls, or Lives*, that were so politick for the *saving* or preserving of them; and

and to be a standing Caution to all succeeding Ages, how unworthy, indeed how dangerous a thing it is for Men to purchase their Lives at the price of their *Consciences*; and to betray their *Souls* to Eternal Damnation in another World, to secure the little Interests and Advantages of *this*.

Such reason therefore had these *Christians* upon all these Accounts, to contend earnestly for the Faith; i. e. not to renounce it, but to continue firm and constant in the Profession of it. Nor were their Engagement, *Secondly*, any less,

Secondly, To contend for it; as it implies a Zeal for the preserving the Primitive Purity of it.

And indeed 'tis this seems to have been the more especial design of St. Jude in this Caution. For having in our Text exhorted them earnestly to contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints; he immediately subjoyns this Reason, *ver. 4. That there were certain men crept in among them, ungodly men, who turn'd the grace of God into lasciviousness, and would otherwise be likely enough to pervert them from it.*

Now

Now this could not but be a very great Obligation upon them to look to themselves, and stand fast in the Truth which they had received, to be thus expressly forewarn'd of their danger; and admonish'd by the *Apostle* what Men there were crept in among them, that would make it their whole endeavour to corrupt their Purity. But especially if we consider the Character which the Holy *Apostles* every where give of them; and which will yet more evidently shew how likely they would be, without very great care, to deceive them. For,

1st. As our *Apostle* tells us, *ver.* 16. They were great *Pretenders*; they spoke mighty things in their own Commendation, as if they alone had not only all Truth, but all Knowledge too on their sides; and the rest of Mankind were but as Beasts in comparison of them. Now this oftentimes makes a huge impression upon weak Minds, who do not sufficiently consider how suspicious a thing it is for Men to be too forward in their own Commendation; and that the best and wisest Men are commonly

monly those, who make the least noise of their Goodness, and their Knowledge.

2dly. They were very subtle and diligent in propagating their *Heretic*. They durst not attack those whom they knew to be very firm, or well instructed in the Faith. But they crept sily and secretly into Mens Houses, and, as the *Devil* their Master before them, they set commonly upon the weaker Sex; *leading captive silly* ^{2 Tim. iii. 6.} *Women*, says St. Paul, and *those too*, for the most part, *laden with divers lusts*. Such for whom *Christianity* was too severe and rigid an Institution, they could not find any great hopes of living up to, or consequently of being saved by the Rules of that; and they were therefore glad to hear of some more easie, and more agreeable way to Happiness.

3dly, And such, *Thirdly*, these *Heretics* fail'd not to propose to them. Their *Religion* consisted chiefly in a sett of incomprehensible *Phrases* and *Notions*; and if they were but Admirers of *Simon* and his *Helena*, it was

A a for

Ver. 4, 8,
10, 16, 18,
19.

for the rest no great matter how little *Morality* they observed. If it were dangerous to profess *Christianity*, they might freely deny it; and *judaize*, rather than suffer Persecution. If their Lusts disturb'd them, it was natural, and therefore lawful to gratifie them: and it was a great mistake to think that they ought not to do so. The truth is, I am ashamed to repeat in this place, what *Ecclesiastical Writers* have delivered down to us concerning them: And I shall content my self to refer you only to this short *Epistle*, for the *Character* both of them and their *Religion*. For I am much mistaken if this alone will not suffice to shew what just cause our *Apostle* had to fear their prevailing: and that such an easie Practice, supported by such high Pretences, might be but too apt to gain over *Profelytes* to its Party.

Let us see therefore in the last place,

4thly, By what means it was that St. *Jude* here exhorted the yet *Orthodox Christians* to contend for their Faith, and secure themselves in those dangerous Times.

And

And those are principally these five :

1. By a close *Adherence* to that *Doctrine* which had been delivered to them.
2. By taking heed of those that would seduce them from it.
3. By *building themselves on their holy Faith* ; i. e. by adding Innocency of Life to the Purity of their Faith.
4. By fervent *Prayer* to God for his Assistance. And,
5. By a serious consideration of their future state.

These are the *means* which St. Jude here exhorts them to make use of to secure their Faith ; and they are indeed such as if duly observed, will not fail to have a prosperous *Effect* to the end for which they are proposed.

1st. The *First* way to contend earnestly for the Faith, is, To keep close to that *holy Doctrine* which we have received.

This was what the *Apostle* in our *Text* advised them to do ; or rather, not barely to keep close to it, but, as

A a z the

the Phrase here is, *to contend earnestly for it*. And that was then a most undoubted Security, when the *Apostles* themselves taught them their Religion; and so their *Faith* came to them without all dispute, *pure and uncorrupted*. And however we do not now pretend that Men should give up themselves so intirely to our Conduct, as to stop their Ears to whatever can be said against us: yet since we profess no other *Faith* than that which *was once delivered unto the Saints*; since the *Rule* by which we go, cannot be denied to contain that *Faith*, and we desire not to be believed by you, any farther than what we teach is found to be agreeable to that *Rule*: I think we may very reasonably thus far at least make the Application even now, That you ought not lightly to forsake a *Faith* which is built upon such a *Foundation*, I am sure not for such a one as is built upon any other. And though we are so far from encouraging a blind Obstinacy in any one, that, on the contrary, we had rather all Men would search and see, whether what we profess, be not indeed that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*: yet

yet this deference we think every one ought to pay to that *Church* which first made him *Christian*, and to those *Guides* whom God's Providence has set over him to build him up in the *Faith*; as not lightly to forsake either them or their *Doctrine*, but to presume for the *Truth* of what they already profess, till they can be very clearly and evidently convinced of the contrary. But,

2dly, The next *means* proposed, whereby they were to contend for the *Faith*, was, By taking heed of those who would have seduced them from it.

This is the *general* design of this whole *Epistle*, and I have before shewn what great need there was of such a Caution. Now by taking heed of *Seducers*, I do not mean to imply, that Men should be so obstinately wary, as not to hearken to any thing that one of a contrary Persuasion is able to say either for his own Opinions, or against ours: For that were to lead Men by *Faction*, not *Reason*. But I mean these Two things: First, That we should not have our Ears so open, as to hearken to every thing that any one shall think fit

to offer to disquiet our Minds, and disturb our Consciences, without any just occasion for it : Nay, it may be, upon the account of such things, wherein we are certainly and evidently convinced, that we are in the right. Much less, that we should seek occasion of *Disputes*, and love to be perpetually raising Difficulties against our *Religion*, lest we should at last provoke God to give us over to Delusion, and punish our needless exposing our selves to *Temptation*, by suffering us to be overcome by it. Nor, Secondly, So far comply with such Persons, as to give our selves up to their *Seduction*, and become easie and willing to be deceived by them.

It is certainly a great weakness in any Man to go to his *Enemy* for the *Character* of his *Religion*. To enquire concerning the *Truth*, of those who are the profess'd Opposers of it. If Men have *Doubts*, or if their *Curiosity* must be gratified in starting of needless *Scruples*, and one part only be consulted, both Charity and Duty, and I had almost said even common Civility too, might satisfy them, that they ought to be their
Instructions,

Instructors, whom God has set over them to be their *Guides* in Holy things, rather than any others.

But if this be thought too great a *Partiality*, to hear one side only, and not enquire at all of the other ; yet, at least if our *Enemies* may be admitted, our own *Guides* sure ought not to be excluded, but to be allowed at least to be as worthy our regard, as their Adversaries. Nor can I think any otherwise, than that he is minded to be *seduced*, who instead of taking heed of *Hereticks*, seeks only to them ; instead of avoiding them, avoids those from whom, if not alone, yet I am sure principally, he ought to fortifie himself against them.

3dly, The next *means* proposed for their *contending for the Faith*, was, By Innocence and Holiness of Life.

This St. Jude calls, a *Building up our selves upon our most holy Faith*, ver. 20. And again, a *keeping of our selves in the love of God*, ver. 21. And an excellent *means* no doubt it is, to preserve the Purity of our *Faith*, and to keep

our selves from being seduced from it.

I shall not need to tell you how powerful a *motive* the want of *Piety* has been to most of those Errors that have infested the *Church*. Whilst Men, to gratifie their Passions, have corrupted their *Faith*; and Pride and Discontent, Interest and Ambition, Looseness and Indulgence, more than want of Knowledge, have made Men *Hereticks*.

And were we now to enquire, what the true cause is that keeps up these *Divisions* in the *Church* at this day; why Men should be so obstinate in *Errors* so plainly contrary to the very *Nature* of *Christianity*, and, I had almost said, to the common *Sense* and *Reason* of Mankind, that it even poses our *Charity* to think they do not themselves know them to be so; I fear the best Account we should be able to give of this matter, would be, That *Interest* and *Prejudice* blind their Eyes; and that their Errors are as Useful and Beneficial, as they are otherwise Gross and Unreasonable.

But would Men indeed lay aside all Humane Considerations, as in things wherein *Eternity* is at stake, they ought to

to do: Would they with *Charity* and *Humility* seek the *Truth*, and be as willing to discover their own, as they are but too forward to censure other Mens faults: In plain terms, would they be *Christians* indeed, seek nothing but the Glory of God, the Peace and Unity of his Church, and the Salvation of their own Souls; I cannot but think that most of our *Controversies* would presently vanish, and we should yet recover that *Truth* which, I fear, some Men have too long detain'd in Unrighteousness, and been deprived of by their own fault.

But especially would they to this Honesty and Integrity, add,

4thly, The *Apostle's* next Direction, Of fervent *Prayer* to God for his Assistance.

For certainly the *Truth* and *Purity* of *Religion*, is so great a Good, and so pleasing and acceptable to *God Almighty* to be implored of him, that a pious and upright Man, earnestly praying, and heartily seeking after it, shall hardly be deny'd the Happiness of being constant to the *Faith*, if he be already
in

in the right way ; or of being brought to it, if he is not.

He who has promised the true *Votary*, not to refuse him in any thing that is necessary or but expedient for him, if he asks as he ought to do ; will never fail to answer him in a matter of such moment. And if he does not neglect himself while he *prays* to God, but uses such Care and Caution as St. *Jude* here directs us to do for our Security, he need not be afraid, though he were encompassed with *Seducers* on every side ; but be confident, that he shall either still go on in the right way, or obtain God's Pardon, if after all this he should chance to be mistaken in it.

There is yet one *means* more whereby St. *Jude* exhorts the *Christians*, earnestly to contend for their Faith. And that is,

5thly, By a serious Consideration of their future state.

Keep your selves (says he) in the love of God, looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto Eternal Life, ver. 21. And indeed it cannot be doubted but that this great Consideration, which so highly

highly influences all the other parts of a Christian Life, must here also prove of a singular advantage to keep us firm and stedfast in our *Faith*. This will make us diligent in all the rest; will awaken our Care, will perfect our Piety, and enflame our Devotion. By this we shall be secure, that no worldly Considerations shall be able to prevail upon us, to forsake our Religion. We shall neither be moved for any Terrors to renounce it, nor be cajoled by any Interests or Persuasions to give it up. But we shall resolve, as we ought, to enquire diligently into the Grounds of our Profession, to judge impartially, and stedfastly follow what we are persuaded to be the right Faith; that so we may be able to give a comfortable Account of our selves to God, when we shall appear at his Tribunal. No matter how severely we may be censured by Men for our so doing. We know that *Truth* very often meets with, and makes Enemies to the best Men. Christianity it self was once every where spoken against; and St. *Paul* arraign'd as a *Heretick*. But whilst with that *Apostle* we know wherefore we believe, we shall be so far from being

AA. xxiv.
14.

being afraid of their Censures, or ashamed of our Profession, that should we for the sake of Christ, as he was, be brought even before the *Tribunals* of our Enemies, we shall be able with assurance to answer for our selves as he did; *That after the way which they call Heresie, so worship we the God of our Fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets.* Such a power will this great Consideration of *Eternal Life* have over us, to secure us in our Religion, that it will actuate all the other *means* that have before been offer'd to establish our Faith, and it self become a new defence, and such as all the *Sophistry* and *Malice* of our Enemies shall not be able ever to overcome.

And thus have I given you as full an Account as the time would permit of the several things I propos'd to consider: And however I have not so closely confin'd my Reflections to the particular concern of those *Christians* to whom St. *Jude* wrote, as not to have observ'd somewhat in general the use that all others ought to make of this Caution; yet I will now in the *close*
crave

crave leave to offer two or three *Reflections* more, which may serve to shew our own more immediate concern in it.

And, *First*; Let us from hence learn with what *Zeal* and *Constancy* we ought to contend for our Religion; which I will be bold to say, does, if any in the whole World, the best deserve the Character of the Text, of being *the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints*, and that without mixture of any thing corruptive of, or contrary thereunto.

We pretend not to impose any thing either upon your *Belief* or *Practice*, but what the Rule of this Faith, the *Holy Scriptures* themselves prescribe, or at least allow us to do. We give no other *Interpretation* of Scripture, than what is either so apparently the meaning of it, that no impartial Person can doubt of it; or else has been so universally received by the *best* and *purest Antiquity*, and is otherwise so agreeable with the rest of our Faith, that there can be no just cause to suspect it. The *Articles* of our Creed, are the same now, which the Church has received and profess'd from the beginning; and so evidently

dently founded on the *Authority* of *God's Word*, that they neither can nor do admit of any *Dispute* among *Christians*. Those who the most pretend us to be *defective* in our *Faith*, yet dare not say we are *erroneous* in what we do *profess* : They acknowledge that what we *believe* is right, only they think we do not *believe* all that we ought, because not all that they would have us, to do.

And certainly then such a *Faith* as this cannot but deserve to be *earnestly contended for*, as being without all Controversie, truly that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*.

And that so much the rather, *Secondly*, At this time, when so many *Seducers*, for I shall spare the rest of St. *Jude's* Character, *ver. 4.* are crept in among us ; and make it their great Endeavour, by any means, to draw us away from it. I shall not repeat either the manner how I have shewn we ought to *contend for our Faith* against them, or the *Directions* which from the *Apostle* I have before offered for the doing of it. Let us only resolve on that one
most

most just and reasonable *Method*, never to leave our own *Faith*, till we can be clearly and evidently convinced, that we have a better offer'd to us in the stead of it ; and then we shall either free our selves altogether from the Attacks of our *Adversaries*, who seldom care to meddle with honest and understanding Men ; or I am sure we shall not run any great Hazzard by their Attempts.

But above all, *Thirdly* ; Whilst we thus contend for the *Faith that was once delivered to the Saints*, let us be Followers of their *Lives*, as well as of their *Doctrine*. This is that which must save us, when all our Disputes will otherwise stand us in no stead. To *believe* aright, will do us but small service, if we do not *live* so too. And I am persuaded, would we but be prevailed with to do this as we ought, it would not only most effectually secure us in the Truth, but be the most likely means in the World to draw over others to it.

And indeed what pity is it, that a *Church*, which has in all other respects
so

so many admirable Advantages above its *Adversaries*, that it is defective in no other *mark* of being truly *Primitive*, and even in this is less defective than others, should not be blessed with this too? Consider, I beseech you, that we rely upon none of those *broken Reeds* which others lay so much stress upon, to make you *happy in another Life*, though you are not *upright and holy in this*.

If there be then any concern for your *own* or your *Church's honour*; if any *value* for your *Immortal Souls*; if you *desire* the Blessing of God now, and the benefit of his *Promises* in the World to come; if these *Motives*, which one would think should be of all others the most considerable, may be allowed to have any influence at all upon you; think then upon these things, and fulfil ye our Joy in the *practice* of that *Piety* whereunto ye are called. Be as Good, as ye are Orthodox; as free from all Corruption in your Manners, as God be thanked you are from Error in your Belief: Accomplish that great Work, which Heaven seems at last to have begun among us; And as we are now apparently

rently more concern'd for our Religion, than we have perhaps any of us heretofore been; so let us go on in well-doing more and more. Let us grow in Grace, and then we shall also grow in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, till finally we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

OF THE
Nature and End
 OF THE
HOLY SACRAMENT
 OF THE
Lord's Supper,

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at
St. PAUL's COVENT-GARDEN,

Decemb. 30. 1688.

I COR. xi. 24.

This do in Remembrance of Me.

THese Words are part of that
 Solemn *Form* in which our
 Blessed *Saviour* first cele-
 brated the *Holy Sacrament* of his
Body and *Blood*; and establish'd it
 B b 2 20

as a sacred *Institution*, to be continued for ever in his *Church*, in remembrance of that *Death and Passion* which he was just then about to undergo for it.

Whether our *Apostle* recounted the *History* of this great *Institution*, according to what some of those who were present at the first *Celebration* of it, had delivered it unto him ; or whether, as seems most probable, he had received the manner of it by some *extraordinary Revelation* from our *Saviour*

Christ himself : This is plain, that what he here reports to them of this matter, was no idle Story, no vain Account of his own *Invention*, but a

Non est meum quod vobis tradidi, sed à Domino illud accepi : sicut ipse alibi dicit, Non ab hominibus sed à Deo omnia didicisti. Hieron. in ver. 23. — See Gal. i. 1, 12.

true and exact *Relation* of what the *Blessed Jesus* then did, when in the same night in which he was betray'd, he took Bread, and when he had given thanks, brake it, and gave it to his *Disciples*, saying, *Take, Eat, this is my Body which is broken for you,*

This do in Remembrance of Me.

So that our *Text* then you see contains a positive *Command* of our *Saviour Christ* himself, of something which he ordered

ordered his *Apostles* to do with reference to this *Holy Sacrament* : And my business at this time shall be to consider what that was, and how far we at this day are to look upon ourselves to be concerned in it. I shall reduce what I have to offer upon this occasion, to these two general Considerations :

I. Of the *false Construction* and *Application* which those of the *Church of Rome* make of these words.

Which having done, so far as may be necessary to the following Discourse, I will then,

II. Shew what indeed it was that our Blessed Saviour here commanded his *Apostles*, and in *them*, *All of us* to *Do, in Remembrance of Him*.

And by that time I have clearly examin'd these *Two Points*, I presume I shall in some measure have laid open the whole *Nature* and *Design* of this *Holy Sacrament* ; and in that have answer'd the *End* of these *Solemn* and *Extraordinary Assemblies*.

B b 3

And

The Eleventh Sermon.

And first I am to consider,

I. That false Construction and Application which those of the Church of Rome make of these words.

Illud Christi, Hoc facite, non est dictum, nisi Apostolis, qui eo mandato Ordinati sunt primi Sacerdotes Novi Testamenti. Belarm. de Euch. l. 4. c. 16. §. Hac autem.

It is the Opinion of those of the other Communion, That our Saviour Christ here spoke to his Apostles, not as the Representatives of the whole Body of the Church, but as those whom he was now about to consecrate to the peculiar Office of the Ministry in it : And therefore that commanding these, To Do This, He did at once both command them to continue this Holy Sacrament for ever in his Church, and also at the same time invest them with a Power, to Consecrate, and Take, and Distribute it to others, as he had done to them,

Illud Hoc facite, non significat solum Manducate & Bibite ; quod convenit omnibus Christianis, sed significat, Consecrate, Sumite & alius Distribuite ut Me facere vidistis. Ista autem tria non possunt convenire omnibus, Ergo illud Mandatum non est datum omnibus, sed solum sacerdotibus. ibid.

To which if we did add their other Notion of this Sacrament, viz. that in the Celebration of it, there is (c) a true and proper Offering made for the Sins and,

(c) Concil
Trid. Sess.
xvii. Can. 1

and Satisfaction both of the Dead and the Living, we shall then find the full import of our Text, according to their sense, to be this ; DO THIS, that is, Receive the power which I hereby give you of consecrating, i. e. (d) of converting ^{(d) Sess. xlii. Can. 1.} these Elements of Bread and Wine, ^{4.} into the true and proper Substance of my Body and Blood ; and having so done, (e) Offer them up to my Father as a ^{(e) Sess. xxii. Can. 2.} true and real propitiatory Sacrifice, (f) for the Sins and Satisfaction, for ^{(f) Ibid. Can. 3.} the Punishments and all other the Necessities of all my faithful Disciples, whether they be alive or dead ; whether they be yet on Earth, or gone to Purgatory.

Such is the Account which those of the Church of Rome give us of these words : And in this they are so very confident, that they not only (g) Anathematize ^{(g) Concil. Trid. Sess. xxii. cap. 1.} all those who shall say ^{Christus Corpus & Sanguinem} either that Christ in this Command did not institute his Apostles, Priests ; or

suum sub speciebus Panis & Vini Deo Patri obtulit : ac sub earundem rerum Symbolis, Apostolis quos nunc Novi Testamenti Sacerdotes constituebat, ut sumerent tradidit : & Eisdem, Earumque in Sacerdotio successoribus ut offerrent præcepit, per hæc verba, Hoc facite in meam commemorationem. And Can. 2. Siquis dixerit illis verbis, Hoc facite, &c. Christum non instituisse Apostolos Sacerdotes, aut non Ordinasse ut ipsi alique Sacerdotes offerrent Corpus & Sanguinem suum, Anathema sit.

that he did not Command, that *they*, and *other Priests*, should in like manner offer up his *Body* and *Blood*; but have also made it the very *Form* of *Ordaining Priests* at this day in their *Church*, having delivered the *Patin* and *Chalice* into their hands, to bid them, *(h) Receive Power to offer Sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Mass for the Living and for the Dead.*

(h) See Ca-
tech. ad Pa-
roch. par. 2.
de Ord. Sa-
cram. n. 50.
§. tertio.

I shall need say very little to shew the falseness of this *Interpretation*, which many of their own *Doctors*, notwithstanding all their *Definitions* concerning it, yet are not themselves very well satisfied withal: They freely allow, that this *Command* of our *Saviour*, when he bids them *Do this*, cannot be so restrain'd to his own *Act* of *Consecrating* the *Holy Eucharist*, as not to have an equal respect to the *Peoples Act* of *Receiving* it: And by consequence, that all that can hence be gathered, is, that our *Saviour* has hereby obliged his *Church* to the continuance of this great *Memorial* of his *Death*, both by the *Consecrating* and *Distributing* of the *Priests*; and by the *Receiving*, and *Eating*, and *Drinking* of the *People*; and which is no other *Account* than we
our

our selves give of the *Words* before us.

'Tis from hence that

(i) *Aquinas* concludes, that all *Christians* are obliged, as far as they have opportunity, to *communi-*
cate in this *Holy Sacra-*
ment, not only in *Obe-*
dience to the *Commands*

of the *Church*, but as a thing which our Saviour *Christ* himself required, when he said in our *Text*, *This do in Remembrance of Me.*

But *Estius* is more exprefs: He tells us, that by *Do this*, our Saviour plainly intended the whole *Action* both of his *Consecrating* and *Distributing*, and of *their Receiving* these sacred Ele-
ments. As if he had said, (k) *What*

you have seen now done by me and you,
that do you and your Successors henceforth
in Remembrance of Me. And that this

is clearly the meaning, he shews from the *Context* of *St. Paul* in the following Verses, where repeating the very same

grave; he adds, *Non enim absolute dicitur Facite, sed Hoc facite,*
i. e. Id quod à Me & à Vobis nunc fit aut factum est, deinceps vos &
vestri Successores, facite in Mei memori- m. Et infra.
i Cor. 11. Illud facere etiam ad Plebem refert Edentem & Bibentem
q̃ hoc Sacramento, &c.

(i) *Manifestum est quod Homo tenetur hoc Sacramen-*
tum sumere non solum ex sta-
tuto Ecclesie, sed ex mandato
Domini, dicentis, Hoc facite
in meam commemorationem.
Aquin. part. 3. Qu. 80.
Art. 11. id Corp.

(k) *Estius*
in Sent. l. 4.
dist. 12.
§. 11. pag.
165. l. A. B.
Where ha-
ving shewn
that facere
cannot be
interpre-
ted conse-

Command,

Command, after the Distribution of the Cup, that he had mentioned in my Text upon the delivery of the Bread, he expresses himself in this plain manner, *This do ye* (says he) *as oft, not as ye shall Consecrate or Offer, but as ye shall drink it in Remembrance of Me.* And then immediately subjoins a Reason, which clearly refers to the *Peoples Eating and Drinking*, and not to the *Priest's offering* any pretended Sacrifice in this Celebration: For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come; that is, ye do, by this Action of yours, fulfil the Command before us, ye set forth the Memory of Christ's Death and Passion, and do this in Remembrance of Him.

(l) *De Euch.*
l. 4. c. 16.
S. Hæc au-
tem.

And even (l) *Bellarmin* himself, tho' he supposes these words to have been spoke in a peculiar manner to the *Apostles*, as those who were hereby to be consecrated to the *Priestly Office*; yet cannot but own, that they must refer as well to the Action of their (m) *Eat-*

(m) *Ibid.*
l. 4. c. 25.
S. Videtur
tamen.

Where he gives this Paraphrase of our Text: *Id quod nunc agimus, Ego dum confecto & porrigo, & vos dum accipitis & comeditis frequentate deinceps usque ad mundi consummationem.*

ing,

they are to this of our Saviour's Blessing and Distributing the Holy Elements;

(20) Nay, becalys yet more, that it is most agreeable both to the Context of St. Paul, and to his Design

of repeating the History of this Institution, to ap-

ply them rather to the Disciples action of Eating and Drinking, than to our

Servants of Consecrating and Offering; the Error of the Corinthians, which he

design'd to correct, consisting not in their Consecrating, but in their Re-

ceiving of the Holy Eucharist, in that they did not do it with that due re-

verence which they ought to do. Tho' how to reconcile this not only with the

Opinion of his Church before mention'd, but even with his own Interpretation of

Aquinas's Argument from this place, to prove the necessity of all Mens Re-

ceiving this Holy Sacrament where it may conveniently be had; viz. that

(21) St. Thomas did did not intend to col-

His words are; Neque obstat quod S. Thomas colligit ex hoc loco esse de jure divino ut omnes aliquando sumant Eucharistiam; ubi videtur intellixisse illud. Hoc facere dictum esse Omnibus; Nam S. Thomas non vult colligi immediate sed mediate. Quia enim Dominus jubet Apo-

stolis ut consecrent, sumant, & distribuunt, consequenter jubet Aliis ut accipiant de manibus sacerdotum distribuentium.

(20) Ibid. Paulus autem refert Institutionem illa Verba ad actionem Discipulorum, id quod ex 2^o cor. 26. colligitur. Neque enim potest ex institutione de proprio B. Pauli, &c. p. v.

(21) Bellarm. ib. c. 16 § Di-

lect

lect this *immediately* from this Command, as if it had been given to *All*; but only by *consequence*, as our Lord must be understood to have commanded the People to Receive, what he commanded the Priests to Consecrate and Distribute, I cannot easily understand.

The truth is, both the Opinion of our Saviour's making his Apostles Priests by these words, and the Paraphrase which they now give of them in order thereunto, are a meer Invention of these later Ages, sought out to support that other great Corruption of this Holy Institution, the Communitating of the Laity only in One Kind. When being pressed both with the Example of our Blessed Lord in his Institution of this Holy Sacrament, who gave the Cup as well as Bread to his Disciples; and with his positive Command, to do that to Others which Himself had done to Them, The nice Masters of the Schools, Men who never wanted a subtilty to elude what they could not otherwise fairly answer, first found out this admirable Secret, unknown to the Church for above a Thousand Years before; viz. That our Saviour here Consecrating the Holy Eucharist, and giving a Command to his
Apostles

Apostles to Do likewise, did invest them thereby in their *Priestly Office*, and so intitule them to a Right of *Receiving* the *Cup* from him, which neither they therefore had any Right to *before*, nor have the *People* by consequence any more Right to at this very day.

But however, such an Evasion as this might well enough become the *School-Errantry*, and serve to amuze a barbarous Age wherein it was first invented; yet was it certainly too great a presumption in the *Council of Trent*, in such inquisitive Times as these, to impose it upon Mens Consciences as an *Article of Faith*; and to think, by the vain Terror of an ungrounded *Anathema*, to secure it against all Opposition. For not to insist,

First, On the many gross Absurdities, and even blasphemous Consequences of the very Doctrine of the *Mass* it self, That there should be a true and proper Sacrifice, and yet nothing truly and properly sacrificed: A Propitiatory Offering, and yet no Propitiation made by it: That *Christ* was but once offered for our Sins, and yet that he should be offered again ten thousand times every day:
That

The Eleventh Sermon.

That by that *One offering of Himself*, he should have perfected for Ever them that are sanctified; and yet that those that are sanctified, should not be perfected without many of these *New-Mass Offerings*, made for them. To say nothing,

Secondly, Of the inconsistency there is in the very Supposition, That our Saviour Christ should ordain Priests of the *New-Covenant* in his Church, before he had yet so much as sealed that *Covenant* by his Death, or establish'd his Church. To pass by,

Thirdly, That we have another plain and evident Account, both when, and after what manner, and with what words our Blessed Saviour did ordain his Apostles to the Ministry of his Church, namely, in the *Twentieth Chapter* of *St. John*; where we are told how, after his Resurrection, he thus gave them their Mission, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* *Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you: And then he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained:* And

And which are at this day own'd by the * *Church of Rome*, as well as by us, for one *Essential part of the Priestly Mission*, and accordingly made use of by them in their *Ordination*: So that either this *Sacrament* may be *reiterated*, or the *Character divided*, and one part conferr'd at one time, the other at another; all which is contrary to their own *Principles*; or else the *Apostles* were not *ordain'd Priests* when they received the *Holy Eucharist*, but when our *Saviour* here *breathed upon them*, and both by his *Action* and his *Words* plainly expressed his *Mission* of them.

I say, not to *insist* on any of these things, either we must look upon these words to relate to the whole *Church*, to the *People* as well as to the *Priests*; and then to be sure they cannot have either the *Effect* or *Signification* that they herein attribute unto them; or else it will remain, that there is no *Divine Command* at all entitling the *People* to any Right to this *Holy Sacrament*:

* *Catech. Conc. Trid. de Ord. Sacr. n. 5. §. 4. Mandibus capiti (sc. ordinandi in sacerdotem) ejus impositis, Accipe, inquit, Spiritum Sanctum, &c. Eique Caelestem illam quam Dominus Discipulis suis dedit peccata retinendi ac remittendi potestatem tribuit.* And again, *De Sacr. Pœnit. n. 71. Il. lustr. vrb. hujus Ministerii Testimonium præbent illa Domini Verba apud S. Joann. Quorum remisistis, &c. neque enim omnibus, sed Apostolis tantum hæc dicta fuisse constat, quibus in hac functione sacerdotes succedunt.*

ment: For if our Saviour spoke to his *Apostles* as *Priests*, if he not only took the *Bread* and the *Cup* and consecrated them as a *Priest* himself, but also distributed them to the *Apostles* as *Priests*, and bad them, *Take, Eat and Drink* as *Priests*; then are not the *People*, no not by Cardinal Bellarmin's consequence, at all concerned in any part of this *Institution*, which the *Priests* only, by virtue of this *Command*, are obliged to continue, and consecrate, offer, give, receive, all by themselves, and to one another, as *Christ* and his *Apostles* here are supposed, without the rest of the *Disciples*, and as *Priests*, to have done.

To pass by therefore this *Interpretation*, both so lately invented, and so weakly established; set up to support that bold attempt of depriving the *People* of one half of the *Communion*, and that upon such *Principles* as in the natural consequence of them rob them of both; I go on to the other Point I have proposed, and shall now take leave somewhat more largely to insist upon; *Viz.*

II. To

II. To shew, what indeed it was that our *Saviour* here commanded his *Apostles*, and in them all of us, to *do in Remembrance of Him*.

And to this end it will be necessary that we distinctly to consider these Two things :

First, What we are to understand by the Phrase, *Do this* ?

Secondly, What it is to *Do this in Remembrance of Christ* ?

First, What we are to understand by the Phrase, *Do this* ?

I answer ; That if we take these words as they lye before us in the first and most obvious Form of a *Command*, they will then imply a Commission hereby given to the *Apostles*, and in them to the *whole Church*, to continue this *Holy Sacrament* by an *Ordinance* for ever, as a Solemn Memorial of that *Death* and *Passion* which he was now about to undergo for us.

C c

When

When God was pleased, by a wonderful Deliverance, to bring up the Children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt, we read in the *Twelfth Chapter of Exodus*, That the same Night in which he did it, he commanded them to kill a Lamb, and eat it after a solemn manner, with bitter herbs, and unleavened-bread; and to continue every Year, by a constant repetition of that Sacred Ceremony, the Memory of that Deliverance which he had wrought for them.

In like manner our Saviour Christ, being now to fulfil that Redemption, whereof the other was but a Type and Representation, takes care for a Solemn Memorial to be continued of it in all Ages of his Church to the End of the World. He institutes another and better Supper; and the Observation whereof should not only be the Commemoration of his Delivering us, but to the worthy Partaker of it, the application also of all the Benefits of it. He takes Bread, blesses it, and breaks it; He takes the Cup, and blesses it, and distributes both to his Disciples; and then in the words of the Text, bids them also do the same in Remembrance of Him:

Him: That as the *Jewish Church* had by their *Paschal Feast* hitherto kept up the Memory of God's once *delivering* their *Fathers* from the *destroying Angel* in the *Land of Egypt*; so should we from henceforth by this *Feast of Eucharist* continue the *remembrance* of that infinitely *greater and better Redemption* which he was just now about to purchase by his *own Death* upon the *Cross* for us.

And this is no doubt the first and most proper design of these words: But now, *Secondly*, If we consider them not only as a *Command*, but as they are, a *Direction*, to inform his *Apostles* first, and then *us*, how we should celebrate this *Holy Sacrament*; they will then add thus much to our former Account, namely, that we have here not only in general a *Command* to continue the Memory of the *Death of Christ* in this *Holy Sacrament*, but moreover an *Instruction* also, *after what manner* we are to do it.

That as our *Saviour Christ* here took the *Bread*, blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his *Disciples*, saying, *Take, Eat, this is my Body which was given for you*: As he took the *Cup*, blessed it, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye All*

of this ; so should those who now minister in *Holy Things*, when they stand at the *Altar*, and set forth the *Death* of *Christ* in this *Sacred Memorial* of it, after his *Example*, and in *Obedience* to his *Command*, in like manner *take*, and *bless*, and *distribute* these *Sacred Elements* to all those who *partake* with them in this *Sacrament*.

* As the *Apostles* received first the *Bread*, then the *Cup* too at his *Hands* ; so should all they who supply the place of the *Apostles* at our *Tables*, receive both the *one* and the *other* of these after their *Example*.

* And whosoever he be that celebrates this *Holy Feast* in any other manner than the *Blessed Jesus* did, and has given us a *Command* to do it, he therein both departs from the *Example* of our *Saviour*, and violates the design of his *Precept*, who not only in that particular manner, as so many of the *Holy Pen-men* have set forth to us, establish'd this *Sacrament* Himself, but in the words of my *Text*, has expressly commanded us to continue it for ever in the same manner in which he established it, *Do this in Remembrance of Me*.

But

But here therefore let me not be mis-understood : For when I say that our *Saviour Christ* in my *Text* commanding his *Apostles* to *do this in Remembrance of him*, did not only in general command them to perpetuate the Memory of his Death by this *Holy Ordinance* for ever, but did moreover direct them *after what Manner* they should do it : I do not mean to signifie thereby, that we ought to look upon our selves to be so tied up to the *Example of Christ*, as not to be at liberty to depart in any the least Circumstances from that first *Celebration* of it : For then we must never administer nor receive this *Holy Sacrament* but *after Supper*, in a private Chamber, or upper Room, to Men only, and not to Women, and those just *twelve*, neither more nor less, and *lying along with our Heads in one anothers Bosoms*, as the *Apostles* now did, and which I suppose no *Christian*, of whatsoever *Church* or *Persuasion* he be, does at all think himself obliged to do.

But my meaning herein is this ; That in those things wherein the *Nature* of this *Holy Sacrament* consists, and which the *Holy Scriptures* have recounted to us on purpose to direct us in the Celebra-

tion of it ; in those we are not to depart from our *Saviour's Institution*, nor to presume to set up our own Innovations, as the *Council of Constance* has most presumptuously done in opposition to, and even in defiance of our *Blessed Lord's Appointment*.

To receive the *Holy Sacrament*, in this or that *posture*, with such or such particular *Ceremonies*, these are things wholly foreign to the *Nature and Design* of this *Blessed Sacrament*, and therefore such as may in different places and Ages be different. And every Christian ought to comply with what is used and prescribed in that *Church* with which he communicates.

But for those things in which the very Nature of this *Holy Sacrament* is concern'd ; for such *parts* as constitute the *integrity* of it, and serve the more lively to set it off as a memorial of the Death and Passion of *Christ*, and which therefore we must look upon our *Lord and Saviour* to have sealed with his express Command, *Do this* ; In these, I say, we are to keep close both to the *Example* of our *Saviour*, and to the *Command* of the *Text* ; and when he has distinctly instituted this *Holy Supper*

in Two Kinds, not dare to command Men, under the pain of an *Anathema*, to believe that *One alone* is sufficient.

And this may suffice for the Explication of the former part of my Text, What it is we are to understand by that Phrase of my Text, *Do this*. I go on, Secondly, to enquire, What it is to *do this in Remembrance of Christ*.

It is, I think, agreed on all hands, That the *Design* of our Saviour in this Command, was to set forth the great End of his Instituting this *Holy Sacrament*; viz. That it was to keep up in our own Minds, and set forth to others, a solemn and lively Remembrance of his dying for us, and of the great Benefits and Advantages that accrue to us thereby. And however it be pretty hard to reconcile this plain Design of this Institution, with what those of the other Communion now make to be the main business of it; namely, *To be a true and proper Propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the Living, and of the Dead; in nothing differing from that upon the Cross, but only in the manner of the Oblation:*

A remembrance being ever of things absent from, not present with us; and the same *Sacrifice* very improperly said to be a *Type* or *Memorial* of it self; yet so clearly is this design of this *Holy Sacrament* here declared to be for the remembrance of *Christ's Death* and *Passion*, that they have chosen rather to encounter all these Absurdities, than to adventure to deny what our *Savior* has so very plainly delivered as the *End* of this *Institution*.

But though it is not therefore to be doubted, but that the Intention of our Blessed *Lord* in this Command, was to oblige us, by such a Solemn Ceremony as this, to continue the *Memory* of his *Death*; yet we are not therefore to think, that all we have to do when we come to the *Holy Table*, and attend on this *Great Memorial*, is simply to remember or call to mind the *Sufferings* of our *Saviour*. No, this is not sufficient to answer either the meaning of this *Command*, or the design of this *Institution*. The word in the Original, which we here render *Remembrance*, is very *emphatical*, and imports not a bare calling to mind, but a renew'd *Commemoration*. It regards the Affections of the Heart, as well as the Action of the

the Mind. In a word, it denotes not so much a *private Remembrance*, as a *publick and solemn Commemoration*; when in our *Apostle's Phrase*, ver. 26. we do *avayshew*, *annunciate* and *shew forth* to others, at the same time, that we thus *call to mind* our selves, the *Lord's Death*; and that with all those pious motions and resentments that beset so excellent and so advantageous a *Remembrance*.

To know therefore what it is that our Saviour here requires of us, when he bids us to *do this in Remembrance of Him*, two things will be necessary to be considered by us :

First, What it is that we are to *remember* or *shew forth*, when we come to this *Holy Sacrament*?

Secondly, In *what manner*, and with *what Motions* and *Affections* we are to do it?

And, *First*, let us examine,

What it is that we are to *remember* or *shew forth*, when we come to this *Holy Sacrament*?

Now

Now this in general St. Paul here tells us is his *Death*, ver. 26. that is, that bitter *Death* and *Passion* which he was just then about to undergo for our sakes, when he established this Solemn Memorial of it. For (says he) *as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the LORD's Death till his coming.*

But because a bare Remembrance of the *Death* of *Christ*, without any farther Consideration either of the *cause* and *manner* of it, or of those infinite *Advantages* which accrue to us thereby, will afford but a very imperfect Memorial to us. We must therefore, for a full discharge of this duty, and to raise up in our Souls those suitable resentments we ought to bring to this Holy Administration, take a farther and more particular prospect of it : And consider,

First, What our *State* and *Condition* was that obliged our Blessed Saviour thus to die for us?

Secondly, What that *Death* & *Passion* was which he underwent for our sakes, and has therefore commanded us to remember in this Holy Sacrament ?

Thirdly,

Thirdly, What the Benefits are that accrue to us thereby?

And, *First*, *To do this in Remembrance of Christ*, will engage us to call to mind, what our State and condition was, that obliged our Blessed Saviour thus to die for us.

For however we were by *Baptism* wash'd from all the *Guilt*, and delivered from the *Punishment* of our *Original Pollution*, and admitted into the *Covenant of Grace*, and made Heirs of the *Promise of Eternal Glory*; yet we are not therefore to think our selves ever the less concerned when we come to this *Holy Sacrament*, and shew forth that *Death* of the *Lord*, by which our very *Baptism* it self was consecrated into a *laver of Regeneration*, there to call to mind that wretched State in which we once were, and must for ever have lain, had not the *Blessed Jesus given himself up unto Death for us*.

I should indulge too much your Curiosity in an Argument of this moment, should I enter on that vain Speculation which the *School-men* first started, and has since

since been made the Sport and Diversion of our Modern *Scepticks* in Religion ; Whether *God* could not otherwise have provided for the Pardon and Salvation of Mankind, than by the *Death* of his *Son* ? For since it was the Pleasure of *God* to pitch upon this way of doing it, to what purpose is it for us vainly to enquire whether he might not have made use of some other ? This we ought at least to believe, That *God* had his Reasons for preferring this ; and that however we ought not so far to tye up the Power and Liberty of our *Creator*, as to presume to say he could not otherwise have *redem'd* us, than by the *Death* of *Christ* ; yet thus much we may, and 'tis our duty to conclude, That none could have better, or so well have answer'd the great Ends both of his *Justice* and of his *Mercy* ; or more illustriously have set forth the Riches of his Love and Favour to Mankind ; or more powerfully have engaged us to a suitable return of Love to him ; or more clearly have convinced us of the hatred of *God* to Sin ; or more effectually have stir'd us up to our utmost endeavours to live as we ought to do, and as becomes those who had been
so

so wonderfully *redeem'd* by the *precious Blood* of the *Son of God* himself.

But though this then be a *Question* otherwise of more *Curiosity* than *Use*; and raised for the most part rather to *cavil* at *Religion*, than to magnifie the Power of it; yet may it here perhaps be of some benefit to us, to fill our Souls with the highest resentments of Love and Gratitude to our Great *Redeemer*, to consider not only from what *Miseries* he has delivered us, but with what a *freedom* and *readiness*, and *good-will* to us he did it. No, *God* was not *constrain'd*, nor any *necessity* put upon our *Saviour Christ*, as if either the one *must* have *died*, or that the other could not by any other means have reconciled Mankind unto himself. It was the free Choice of both, by this means, the better to magnifie their *Love* to us, and to secure our *Love* and *Duty* to them again; that so, as *St. John* says, 1 Ep. iv. 19. *We may love God, because he first loved us.*

Hence it is that the *Holy Scriptures* every where set out to us the whole business of our Salvation, as the effect of the *free Choice* and *Pleasure* of *God*. So says *St. John*, cap. iii. 16. *God so loved*

loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. So says St. Paul, 2 Tim. i. 9. where he makes the business of our Redemption to have been the eternal purpose of God, before Adam had yet sinned, or by consequence before there could be any necessity of Christ's dying for us; who hath saved us, says he, and called us with an Holy Calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began. And of our Blessed Saviour, the same Apostle tells us, not only that He gave Himself for us, Tit. ii. 14. but that he did it with all imaginable readiness, and with the same good-will with which God designed it, Lo I come (says he) to fulfil thy Will, O God, Heb. x. 7, 9. And again in St. John, speaking of laying down his life for us, Joh. x. 18. he declares, ver. 18. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of my self; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

Such therefore was the love of our Blessed Saviour to us, in freely giving up himself to the Death for us. And
for

for the reason that induced him to it, and the benefits which thereby accrue to us, I shall not need to say either what or how great they were. Indeed, the time would fail me, should I go about particularly to lay them all before you. Miserable was the State, and deplorable the Condition of Mankind, beyond any thing that we are able almost to conceive.

We were all dead in Trespasses and Sins, and must for ever have lain both under the *Guilt* and *Punishment* of our *Transgressions*, had not the Blessed *Jesus* opened to us the *Gates of Heaven*, and sealed a *Gospel of Repentance* with *his own Blood*, for the *Remission* of our *Sins*. Our *Nature* was *decayed*, and that he has restored; so that whereas before we had *no sufficiency* of our selves, we have now *a sufficiency of God*, and *can do all things through Christ that strengthens us*. Our *Sins* had got the *dominion* over us; and these he has not only very much prevented by his *Grace*, but will also utterly wipe away by his *Death* and *Satisfaction* for us. We were under a miserable Sentence of *Death* and *Judgment*: But Christ has now took away the *sling* of the one, and

2Cor.iii.9.
Phil.iv.13.

and the *danger* of the other ; so that our *Temporal Death* is no longer a *Punishment*, but rather a *Blessing* to us ; and the *Eternal Judgment* of God, shall, instead of being our *Condemnation*, prove to us *perfect Absolution*, and a *glorious Reward*.

This is the blessed Change which has been made in our Condition, and which certainly ought to render the *remembrance* of our *Text* most dear and precious to us.

But I must not insist any longer upon this Point ; I am persuaded there is no one that now hears me, so ignorant in the *great Mystery* of *Godliness*, as not to be fully acquainted with this *first* and *chiefest Foundation* of all our Faith. Nor have I mentioned that little which I have now remark'd of it, so much to instruct you in what you ought to make a great part of your *Memorial* when you come to this *Holy Sacrament* ; as rather if it shall please God to stir up some Affections both in my self and you, that may be suitable to a serious Reflection on all these things : There being nothing, it may be, in the World, more apt to fill our Souls with that due resentment

we

we then especially ought to have of the *Death of Christ* when we come to this *Sacred Memorial* of it, than to consider the wretched condition from which we were delivered by it ; nor more apt to engage us to *live* as becomes those who have been freed from such unspeakable Miseries, and are now put into a capacity of Everlasting Glory ; and without which our *remembrance* of him in this *Sacrament*, will be a Reproach, and a Scandal, not an Honour and a Service to him ; we shall forfeit all the benefits of that *Death* we are call'd to commemorate ; and as our *Apostle* phrases it, *ver. 29. of this Chapter, Eat and drink our own Damnation, not discerning the Lord's Body.*

This is the first thing we are to do in pursuance of the Command of the *Text, This do in Remembrance of Me.*

Secondly, This remembering of Christ in this *Holy Sacrament*, will oblige us to consider what that *Death* and *Passion* was which he underwent for our sakes, and commanded us in this place to continue the *Memory* of in this *Institution.*

D d

And

- And this to be sure must be the proper business of every one when he comes to this *Holy Table*. But now, what, or how great those *Sufferings* were which the Blessed *Jesus* underwent for us, it is not for me to pretend to declare unto you. Great and terrible are the Accounts which the *Scriptures* every where give us of them. How doth *Isaiah* set forth to us in his *Prophecy*, the *Type* and *Shadow* of them? He tells us; That he should be a Man
- Isa. liii. 3, of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; without form, or comeliness, or beauty, that we should desire him. He represents him as labouring under all the Miseries and Afflictions that were due to the Sins of a wicked and incorrigible
- 4, world. Surely (says he) he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God,
- 5, and afflicted; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are
- 6, healed. All we like Sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.

Thus

Thus did *Isaiab* speak of the *Sufferings* of *Christ*, when he *foresaw* his *Death*, and *prophefied* of his *Passion*: And if we look into the Accounts which the *Holy Evangelifts* give us of the Accomplishment of it, we fhall find thofe exceeding whatever we are able to comprehend of it.

1. If we confider the *Circumftances* of his Suffering, it was accompanied with all the bitter Aggravations of Mifery that can well be imagined. For indeed, what elfe can we fay of the Mockeries and the Infults, of the Scorns and Reproaches that appeared in all the parts of his *Passion*? Of the Bafenefs and Treachery of his *Disciples*, and of the barbarous Malice and Cruelty of his *Enemies*? How was he *betray'd* by one of his own *Apoftles*, *deny'd* by another, *forsaken* by all, *condemn'd* at one of thofe Feafts that brought together all the Nation of the *Jews* to *Jerufalem*? And that for two of the moft grievous Crimes that could be laid to the Charge of an *innocent* Soul; *Blafphemy* againft *God*, and *Sedition* among the *People*; *Set at nought* by the *Soldiers*; *Execrated* and *Abjured* by his own *Countrymen*;

Adorn'd as a mock King, that he might be the more derided by them; and then finally, to compleat the Tragedy, *Executed* by a Death not only the most *scandalous*, but the most *painful* of any in the World.

2. Which therefore brings us to a Second Consideration of his *Passion*; namely, of the *Pains* and *Torments* of it. And here I shall not enter upon any long Account of the *Cruelty* of that Death, which has been thought sufficient by those whose kind of *Punishment* it was to give a *general Name* to the *greatest Torments*, by derivation from this one, as the highest and chiefest of all. The *Wounds* of the *Hands* and *Feet*, which the Nails made when he was fastned to the *Cross*; the *Agonies* and *Convulsions* of his *whole Body*, when he *hung* upon it; the *slowness* of *dying*, not to say any thing of those *Furrows*, which, in the *Psalmist's* Speech, they had before made with their *Scourges* upon his Back. All these sufficiently declare to us an extraordinary Suffering, and may warrant us to cry out with the *Prophet*, in the Reflection on it,

Jer. i. 12. *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, behold*

Psal. cxxix.

3.

behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto this sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted his own Son in that day of his fierce anger.

3. And yet still all this was but the least part of his *Passion*; and the *anguish* of his Soul, those *unknown Sufferings* he underwent within, far exceed whatever *Torments* his *Enemies* were able to put him to. They were these that made him *sweat great drops of blood* in the Garden, before ever the Officers had seiz'd him, or begun to inflict the least Punishment upon him. They were these that made him not only declare to his *Disciples*, That his Soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; but carried him farther, in the bitterness of his Grief, to pray three several times to his Father with the greatest importunity; That if it were possible this Cup might pass from him. And when at last it could not be, but that he must drink off the very dregs of it, forced that vehement Expostulation from him, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Luk. xxii.

44.

Mat. xxvi.

37. 38.

Luk. xxii.

44.

Mat. xxvii.

45.

It has been the rashness of some, from all these Expressions of his Grief, but especially from the last, to con-

clude, That our *Saviour* in his *Passion* underwent all the *Punishment* that all the *Elect* of *God* should have suffered for all their *Sins*; and, in short, That he bore in his mind the very *pains* and *torments* of the *Damn'd*. But it is not necessary, nor indeed agreeable to a right Belief, to run to any such Extremity. His *Sufferings* were indeed great, but they were not such as either excluded him from the *love* and *favour* of *God* in the midst of them; nor accompanied with any *despair*, which is always one, and that not the least part of the *Sinner's torment* in another World. He died, and went down into the *Grave*; but his *Soul* was not left in the regions of the dead, nor did his *flesh* see corruption. His *Punishment* was short in the duration, and the intenseness of it, though very *grievous*, yet no more than was agreeable to the *Nature* of a *Man* to bear: And we must not so speak of the *Sufferings* of *Christ*, as to forget, that though he was *God* when he underwent them, yet that he died, and suffered as he was *Man*.

Act. ii. 27.

Thus therefore must we call to mind the *Passion* of our Blessed *Lord*: We must go through all the stages of it with

with care and exactness ; and neither *diminish* the *Horror* of what he endured by an *imperfect Memorial* of it, nor do violence at once both to the *Nature* and *Innocence* of *Christ*, by straining it up to a greater heighth than either the *Authority* of *Holy Scripture*, or the *Honour* of our *Saviour*, or his *Humane Nature* in which he suffered, will permit us to do.

This is the *Second* thing we are to remember when we come to the *Holy Table*. The

Third and last thing here required of us, is, Having called to mind the *Sufferings* of *Christ*, and the *Evils* from whence we are *delivered* by them, to consider finally, what the *Benefits* are that accrue to us thereby.

It is not to be doubted, but that there must be somewhat very extraordinary for which the *Son* of *God* should Himself come down from Heaven, and not only *humble himself* so far as to *take upon him the form of a Servant*, Phil. ii. 7. but being made in the *similitude* of a *Man*, expose himself to all those vile and

D d 4 cruel

cruel *Sufferings* I but just now recounted. And indeed the *Benefits* which he purchased for us by his *Death*, were not at all inferior to the Punishment he underwent for the obtaining of them : And to speak them all in one *general Conclusion*, he purchased the *Redemption* of a *lost, miserable, sinful World* ; we were all before *dead* in *Trespases* and *Sins* ; we are now raised to the *Hopes* and *Assurance* of *Everlasting Glory*.

But here therefore I will be a little more particular. And,

First, By these *Sufferings* our *Saviour Christ* delivered us from the *Curse* which descended to us by our first Parents *Transgression*, and from that *Eternal Punishment* which must otherwise have been the consequence of it.

For not to enter now into any scrupulous Enquiry concerning the *Nature* of *Original Sin*, or the Grounds upon which God is supposed to *impute* it to us : Or how far we should have been either condemn'd or not for the *Actual Sin* of *Adam* in *Eating* of the *forbidden*

forbidden Fruit : This at least cannot be doubted of by any, That our *Nature* is now much degenerated from that *primitive Purity* in which *Man* was at first created ; that we have all, the very best of us, a strange *Propensity to Evil*, and are born with an *Impotency*, if not *Averse-ness* to that *Virtue and Piety*, which the *Principles of natural Religion*, as well as of *revealed* require of us. So that if we should allow the contentious *Disputers* of our Days, that *God* will not impute *Adam's Transgression* to us for *Sin*, nor condemn us for a *Defect* which we are not our selves consenting to, but bring into the *World* with us ; yet would this have stood us but in very little stead : Whilst we should every one of us have been *Guilty* of so many *Actual Sins*, as had not *Christ* purchased a *Redemption* for us ; must for ever have sunk us down into *Ruine and Destruction*. And certainly we ought then to esteem it no small Benefit of our *Saviour's Passion*, that he has now delivered us from this *Danger* ; and removed the *fatal Necessity* we must otherwise have lain under, of being for ever *miserable*, without all possibility of preventing of it.

But this is only one Part, and that the
first

first and least of those Blessings which his *Death* and *Passion* has obtained for us. For,

Secondly, Our *Saviour Christ* has not only delivered us from those Dangers to which we were before exposed ; but he has put us in a new and better way of attaining to that, nay perhaps to a greater Happiness than what we should have had, if *Adam* had *never sinned*, nor by consequence our *Saviour Christ* ever given himself an *Offering* for our *Sins*.

This is indeed the great Commendation of our *Saviour's* Love to us, that not content to deliver us from those
 Heb. vii. 25 Dangers that before threatned us, *He saves to the uttermost*, those that come to him. And here to unfold the Greatness of this *Benefit*, as I ought to do, I must run through all the excellent *Advantages* of that *New-Covenant* God entred into with us by the *Blood* of his *Son*. But this would carry me into an *Argument*, great indeed, and worthy your Attention, but beyond the Bounds of my present Discourse. In general,

* If to have a *Système* of the noblest and most admirable *Rules* of *Living* that were ever communicated to the World ;
 such

such, as by their *own Excellence*, no less than by *God's Command*, recommend themselves not only to our *Practice*, but to our *Love* too.

* If to be endued with a *supernatural*, Divine Assistance, to enable us to fulfil them, and overcome all those *Temptations* that may at any time seek to draw us from them.

* If to be assured, That upon our hearty Endeavours and earnest Prayers to *God*, this *Grace* of his shall still increase in us, according as we sincerely apply our selves to make use of it, or as other *Circumstances* shall happen to put us in need of it.

* If besides this Help to keep us from sinning, to live under a *Gracious Promise* of *Pardon* for those *Sins*, which many times we shall commit, notwithstanding all our Labour to the contrary, upon our humble *Confession* and hearty *Repentance* of them.

* If to know that for all these Ends, we have a *Redeemer* in *Heaven*, who stands continually in the *Presence* of *God* to make *Intercession* for us, and represent to his *Father* that *Death* and *Passion* which he underwent on purpose, that he might obtain this *Forgiveness* for us ;
In a Word, * If

The Eleventh Sermon.

* If to be undoubtedly secured, That whatever becomes of us now, yet let us but sincerely labour, what in us lies, to fulfil our Duty, and we shall be in a little Time *eternally happy* in the Consummation of all these Blessings in the Kingdom of our Saviour; That yet a few Years and our *High-Priest* shall again return in Glory, and pronounce the great and final *Blessing* upon us, which shall instate us in *Joys* never to be forfeited:

If I say, to live under the Conduct of such a *Saviour* and such a *Religion*; to have the Comfort of so great *Promises* now, and the blessed Assurance of such *Glory* hereafter, may be esteemed a *Blessing*, as indeed what can we think of it, but to be the greatest *Blessing* that a *merciful God* could bestow upon his *Creatures*, or a *Divine Saviour* purchase for his Servants: All this, and many other *Benefits*, which I cannot now so much as mention to you, Christ purchased for us by his *Sufferings*, and calls upon us in this *Holy Sacrament* to remember with the *highest Joy* and the most *grateful Acknowledgments*.

Which brings me to the other thing proposed, for the full *Explication* of the *Duty* here required of us: *viz.*

Secondly,

Secondly, * After *what Manner*, and
* With *what Affections* it is, that we are
to *Do this in Remembrance of Him*.

For the former of these,

I. The *manner*, How we are here
to *remember Him*;

I have already observed, That the
original Word, which we here render
Remembrance, is very *emphatical*, and
implies not any calling to Mind all these
things, but a *frequent renewed Commemoration*
of them: And that especially
such, by which we may not only *remember*
our selves, but also set forth to others
the *Memorial* of them. So *S. Paul* inter-
prets it, v. 26. *As often as ye eat this bread*
and drink this Cup, [ἀναστυλλετε] *annunci-*
ate, shew forth, make a solemn Decla-
ration of the Lord's Death until his
coming.

And so indeed the very Design of this
Institution will oblige us to understand it.

When our *Saviour* first celebrated this
Holy *Sacrament*, and commanded his
Disciples, by the like Sacred *Ceremony*,
to continue the *Memory* of his Death,
until

until the End of the World : We are told by the *Evangelists*, That he had just finished the *Feast of the Passover* ; into the Place whereof he substituted this *Christian Feast*, and as all the Circumstances of it plainly shew, designed this to have the same Place in the *Christian*, that the *other* had till then had in the *Jewish Church*.

Now concerning that solemn *Feast*, we read in the Book of *Exodus* , cap. xii. 17. That God appointed it [לזכרון] for a *Memorial*, that is, for a solemn Recognition which the People was thereby to make every Year, of that great Deliverance by which they were brought up out of the *Land of Egypt*. And in the thirteenth Chapter they are commanded to *Remember the Day in which they came out of Egypt, and to keep the feast of unleavened bread seven daies* : And then and there solemnly to declare to their *Children* the *Cause* of it : namely, *That they did this because of that which the Lord their God had done for them when they came forth out of Egypt*. To which end it was the Custom of the *Jews* at this Solemnity, to have their *Children* propose to them the *Question*, What the *meaning* of this Solemnity

Exod. xii.
17. xiii. 3,
8, 9.

Exod. xiii.
3.

— 8, 9.

nity was? And thereupon the *Master* of the *House* gave a full Account to them of the *History* of their *Deliverance*; and which from thence they called the *Haggadah*, the *Annunciation* or *Remembrance*: Because of their using it at this Time to *commemorate* or *shew forth* that wonderful *Deliverance*, which God had wrought for them.

Such was the Nature of that *Remembrance* which God commanded the *Jews* to continue in their *Paschal Supper* of His bringing them out of *Egypt*: And the same is the *Remembrance* which our *Saviour* here commands us by this *new Feast*, to continue in his *Church*, of his *dying* for us: We are to celebrate it, as a *solemn* and *Publick Memorial* of that great *Deliverance* which our *Blessed Lord* has wrought for us; and to declare to all the *World* thereby what a *Sense* we have of his infinite *Love* and *Mercy* to us.

Nay, but this is not yet all we are to do, if we will answer the full extent of the *Duty* here required of us. We must not only make, in this *Ho'y Sacrament*, our *Publick* and *solemn Recognition* of *Christ's Death* and *Passion*; but we must do it with that *Affection*, that *Joy*, those *Resentments* that become so great and excellent

excellent a *Memorial*. So these kind of Expressions in *Holy Scripture* are for the most part to be understood; and so it is plain we must take the *Word* in this Place. And this is the other thing remaining to be considered for the full understanding of the *Text*. viz.

II. With what Affections we ought to come to this *Holy Table*, and *Do this in Remembrance of Him*.

It were too much for me here, in the *close* of my Discourse, to resume the whole Consideration of this great *Sacrament*, and enter again upon a particular View of it, and shew what kind of Affections we ought to raise in our Souls, proportionable to the several Parts and Respects of it. If we are indeed so sensible as we ought to be of our *Saviour's* Love to us, in thus *giving himself to the Death for us*: If we have so seriously weighed, as becomes those who are called to this *Feast*, the mighty Benefits and Advantages which are derived to us thereby; what Miseries we have escaped, to what Blessings we are entitled by his *Sufferings*; the *Sense* of all this will soon teach us what *Motions* and *Affections*

Affections ought to fill our Souls, that may be suitable to so great and blessed a Memorial.

For indeed, who can be so ignorant as not to know, without my Remark, when he comes to the *Holy Table*, and there beholds the *Minister of God* setting forth, as *S. Paul* speaks, evidently before his eyes *Christ crucified for Him*; when both his *Words* and his *Actions* call upon Him to consider, How the *Son of God* humbled himself even to the death for our *Redemption*; and submitted his *Body* to be broken, his *Blood* to be spilt, as He there sees the *Bread broken*, the *Wine poured out* in this Celebration; that here certainly he ought with the greatest *Ecstasie of Love* to contemplate this *Love* of his *Saviour* to Him; and break forth into the highest Expressions of a *grateful Thanksgiving*, for this mighty *Demonstration* of his *Favour* and *Affection* to Him.

When from this He begins to reflect,
on that wretched Condition in which
we all of us must have been, had not
the *blessed Jesus* thus graciously under-
took the great Work of our *Redemption*;
and by *dying* for us, *delivered* us from
Ee that

The Eleventh Sermon.

that Death, to which we were condemned, and raised us up to the *Hopes* of *Eternal Glory*: Where is the *Soul*, so dull, so un-affected with the Contemplation of such a glorious Change, as to be able to keep in his joyful Resentments of so wonderful a Deliverance; and not rather burst forth into new Songs of Praise and *Gladness* for all the *Benefits* which God and his Redeemer have been so wonderfully pleased to do unto Him.

But above all, who can think on that *Value* which the Blessed Jesus has put upon our Souls; that he thought the *Salvation* of them to be a Price worthy his own *Death* and *Sufferings* to redeem them; and then consider, That even these very Souls for which Christ died, will yet be exposed to the hazard of a greater and worse *Damnation* than that from which they have been delivered, if we shall still go on impenitent in our *Sins*: And not presently resolve here to sacrifice all his *Passions* at this *Altar*; to lay down all his *Lusts* at the *Pedestal* of the *Cross*, and vow Himself entirely to the Obedience of that *Saviour*, who, as S. Paul tells us, for this very End gave himself for us, that
He

He might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good Works.

Such Resentments as these will naturally arise in every pious Soul, when he comes to this *Sacred Feast*, and therefore I shall not need to give any particular Directions concerning them. Only I would take occasion from this last Import of the *Remembrance* to which our *Text* calls us, To exhort you when you come to this *Holy Institution*, that you would take Care to raise up all these *Affections* and *Resentments* to as great a *Height* as you are able; and having done this, that you would then *cherish* and *improve* them, that being not only *warm* and *vigorous* upon your *Souls* at the present, but also rooted and engrafted into them, they may not easily cool again, but become operative upon your *Lives*, may *increase* your *Love* and *confirm* your *Faith*, and *enflame* your *Devotion*, and keep you firm and steady to your *Duty*, till some new Occasion shall again call you to a new exciting of them.

This will be indeed to render your *Remembrance* such as your Saviour here requires of you: And the frequent *Returns* which by the *Blessing* of God you

here enjoy of this *Memorial* beyond most *Christians* in the *World*; shall not only put you in a Capacity of coming still with better and more affectionate Resentments to this *Holy Sacrament*, but shall, by the Blessing of God, prove a most useful and excellent Assistance, to the promoting of all the other Parts of your Duty; you shall live as becomes those who know what mighty Engagements their *Saviour* has laid upon them; to what *Hopes* they are called, and by what means their *Redemption* was purchased for them.

And as this *Exercise* will be the best means to *prepare* you to come worthily to this *Remembrance*, so will it be also the most powerful Motive to engage you to come *frequently* too. When you shall begin effectually to perceive the *Benefit* of your *Communicating*, in the still new *increase* of *Piety* and *Holiness* in all your *Actions*: When being full with a constant Sense of the *Love* of the Blessed *Jesus*, here set forth to us, you shall find it to be the Desire and Longing of your Souls, to come often to this *grateful* and pleasing Declaration of it. When, in a Word, being accustomed to consider the Blessings and *Advantages* of that *New Covenant*

Covenant our *Blessed Master* has sealed to us in his *Blood*, and here offers to renew with us in this *Sacrament*, you shall wish, if it might be, every Day to repeat it., and think you can never enough declare your Desires of being admitted into the *Conditions* and *Advantages* of it.

And thus have I offered to you what I suppose may suffice for the full Explanation of the *Words* before us. And from the Account, of which we may now easily see, What is the true *Nature* and *Design* of this *Holy Sacrament*? Namely, that it was instituted by our *Saviour* to be a Sacred and Solemn *Memorial* of that *Death* and *Passion* which he underwent for us, and of the great *Benefits* and *Advantages* which accrue to us thereby. That as by the *Paschal Feast* among the *Jews*, God perpetuated the *Remembrance* of his preserving them from the *destroying Angel* first, and then delivering them from their *Egyptian Bondage*; and engaged them to a constant, annual Return of *Joy* and *Thanksgiving* to Him for so great a *Blessing*: So by this better *Passover*, should we in like manner keep up for ever in the *Church* a lively and affectionate *Commemoration* of

1 Cor. v.
6, 7.

that better and more glorious Preservation which our *paschal Lamb*, the Lord *Jesus*, has by his own Blood obtained for us; and set forth to the whole World that *grateful* and *vigorous Sense* which we have of so wonderful and blessed a *Deliverance*.

Now this being the true meaning and Design of this *Holy Sacrament*, we may from hence see, How great and dangerous the Mistakes are which some have run into concerning it, with reference both to *Faith* and *Practice*? For,

1. If this *Sacrament*, as we have before shewn, was instituted as a *Memorial* of the *Death* and *Passion* of our *Saviour Christ*; It is then plain, That it is not our very *Saviour Christ Himself*, neither in the *State* of his *death*, nor in any other, that is here presented to us.

There have been in the *Church*, since the time of *Paschasius Radbertus*, one of the first considerable *Innovators* that we meet with in the *Doctrine* of this *Holy Eucharist*, among others two different Opinions concerning the *Real or Corporal Presence of Christ* in this *Sacrament*, and both maintained with

with no small contention at this day. One, That the *Bread and Wine* are converted into the very *Natural Body and Blood of Christ*, so that nothing of the *Bread and Wine* themselves at all remain, but only in *shew and appearance*, which is what they call *Transubstantiation*; the other, That the true *Substances* of the outward *Elements*, the *Bread* and the *Wine* do indeed remain; but that the very *Body and Blood* of our Saviour *Christ* are in an *extraordinary and supernatural manner* joyned to them; so that in the Communion of them, we do together with the *Bread and Wine*, receive the true *Body and Blood of Christ* into our *Mouths*, truly and really present, which they call *Consubstantiation*.

Now however the latter of these be much the more pardonable *Error* of the two; as neither doing any *Violence* to our *Senses*, which evidently tell us, That what we *see and receive* in this *Sacrament*, is certainly *Bread and Wine*; nor contradicting the many *Passages of Scripture*, which declare to us the same thing; yet are they both very great *Mistakes*. The *natural Body of Christ* being not capable of *existing in more Places than one* at the same *Time*; nor to be

divested of the *inseparable Properties* of a *Body*; such as *Extension of Parts, Space, Figure*, and the like, in which the very *Nature* of a *Body*, as it is distinguished from a *Spirit* does consist.

But these *Opinions* do not only involve a plain *Impossibility* in the very *Nature* of the *Thing* it self; but moreover do carry a manifest *Incongruity* to the *Nature* and *Design* of this *Institution*. For if the *End* of this *Holy Sacrament* were, as our *Text* shews, to be a *Remembrance* of *Christ*; a *Sign* and *Figure* of his *Body* broken, and of his *Blood* shed for us; then certainly, as in all other Cases, the *Sign* must be different from the *thing signified*: so here, the *Sacrament* of *Christ's Body*, is not his *Body*, but the *Memorial* of it; the *Sacrament* of his *Blood* is not his *very Blood*, but the *Figure* and *Representation* of it. And thus these latter Words, *Do this in Remembrance of Me*, become the best and clearest Interpretation of the former, *This is my Body which is given for you*; and shew that we are to interpret it after the same manner, as when we read in the like kind of Speaking, in the *Old Testament*, *This is the Lord's Passover*; i. e. the *Memorial* of that *Action*, when the *Angel* passed over the

the Houses of the *Children of Israel*, and destroyed them not, when at the same Time he *slew the Egyptians*.

But here it may be asked; Do we then exclude *Christ* altogether from this *Holy Sacrament*, and leave only an empty *Sign*, a meer *ceremonial Remembrance* of him and no more? *God forbid!* Nay, but I dare say, We esteem *Christ* to be no *less present*, tho' in another *manner* than they: Inasmuch as in this Sacred Ordinance, he *communicates* Himself in the Benefits of His *Passion* in a more especial manner to every *faithful Receiver* of this Blessed *Sacrament*; and makes the *Bread* which he *eats*, and the *Wine* which he *drinks* become, not indeed by any such needless and absurd *Change*, as we before mentioned, but by *Grace* and *Blessing*; by his *divine Power*, and *Spiritual Communication*, his *Body broken* and his *Blood shed for us*, to all the *Effects* of *Piety* and *Justification*. The *Elements* are not altered, they continue not only after the *Consecration*, but in the very *receiving* of them, the same they were before; *Bread* and *Wine*, without any *bodily Substance* besides either veiled under those *Appearances*, or received together with them. But by *Faith*, at the same
Time

Time that we take these into our *Months*; we take Him also, whom they represent, into our *Souls*: Not as bringing *Christ* from *Heaven*, but raising up our *Minds* and our *Hearts* to that *Holy Place* where he is, we unite our selves to Him; and have all the Benefits of his *Death* and *Passion* communicated to us for the *Forgiveness* of our *Sins*, for the increase of his *Grace* and *Favour* to us here, and to be at once both the surest *Earnest* and the most *effectual Means* to bring us to *everlasting Happiness* hereafter.

This is that *real* but *divine* and *spiritual Presence* of our *Saviour* in this *Sacrament*, which we firmly *believe*, and which secures to us all the *Blessings* and *Advantages* which the others can hope for, from their ungrounded and unwarrantable *Opinion* of a *natural* and *corporal* participation of Him.

2. From this Account of the *Design* and *End* of this Institution it follows in the next Place; What an *Abuse* they have made of it, who from a *Remembrance* of a *Sacrifice* turn it into a *Sacrifice* it self; and instead of esteeming this *Sacrament* a *Memorial* of that offering *Christ* once for all made for us, suppose Him to

to be again as *truly* and *properly* offered in it as ever he was, tho' not in the same manner that he was *once* upon the Cross.

I shall not now insist so long upon this Point, as to shew not only how contrary such an Opinion is to the express Authority of *Holy Scripture*, which declares, That *Christ* was to be offered *once* for all; that by his *once* offering himself for us, he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified; and much more to the same purpose, in the ixth and xth Chapters to the *Hebrews*; but how derogatory to the Honour of our Saviour, whether we consider his former *Sufferings* or his *present Glory*. This is plain, that if the Design of this blessed *Sacrament* were as our *Text* declares it, to be a *Remembrance* of our Saviour's dying for us, then it is not a *new* offering of Him; there being nothing more absurd than to say of the same thing, that it is both the *Memorial* of what was done many *Ages* ago, and the very same thing again done in *Memorial* of its self.

3. From the same Principles it will follow, That if this *Holy Sacrament* be no more than a *Remembrance* of our Saviour

viour Christ, that then certainly those must have very desperately abused it, who pay to it that *Honour* and *Worship* that they would do, to our *Saviour* himself, were his true and natural *Body* there present.

I need not say any thing to prove what the *Superstition* of the *Church of Rome* is as to *this Matter*: They here freely own it themselves, and censure us for not joyning with them in the same Service. They *elevate* their *Host* in the *Mass*, for the People to *adore* it: They have instituted a *solemn Feast*, every Year, to be observed in *Honour* of it: They *dedicate* *religious Societies* thereunto; they set it forth upon their *Altars* to *bless* the *People* there assembled to its *Worship*: If they carry it abroad, whether to the *Sick*, or upon the occasion of any *solemn Processions*, they put it under a *Canopy*, born all the while over it; *Candles* and *Tapers* are carried before it; and a *Bell* is rung all the Way that it passes, to admonish all that are in sight of it to *fall down* and *adore* it: And by all these and many other of their *Actions*, they oblige all Persons to pay the *supreme Honour* that they give to *God*, to this *Holy Sacrament*.

It

It were easie to shew how dangerous this *Adoration* is, even upon their own *Principles*; whether we consider the Impossibility of their being ever sure that their *Host* is indeed *consecrated* as it ought to be; or that if it were, yet at least the *Accidents* of the *Bread* and *Wine*, which are *Creatures*, and yet make up a Part of the *Sacrament*, are by consequence joynt partakers of all their Worship. But alas! what I have now been speaking shews a great deal more: Not only that the *Accidents* of the *Bread* and *Wine* have their Part in being *Objects* of this *Worship*; but that our *Saviour Christ* indeed is not at all concerned in it. They pay their *Adoration* to the inanimate *Creatures* of *Bread* and *Wine*, and commit an *Idolatry* not much less gross, in the Opinion of some of their own Writers, if we are indeed in the Right, than those who fall down before a Piece of *red Cloth*, and pay their *Adoration* to a *Tile* or a *Potsherd*. But,

4. If our *Saviour Christ* in our *Text* plainly commanded his *Apostles*, and in them all of us, To do that in *Remembrance* of Him, which he had there done before their *Eyes*: if what he required

required in order to this *Commemoration*, was, That we should *take Bread and Wine*, and *bless*, and *give*, and *receive* these, in Memory of his Body which was *given*, and of his *Blood* which was *shed* for us; it will, then follow in the Fourth place, That those who do not do this, have plainly departed from our Saviour's *Institution*, and do not *remember* him as they are commanded to do.

And this alone is sufficient to confute that great Corruption of the same Church, in *Communicating* the People only in *One Kind*. And whatever Pretences they may offer for their so doing, had they as just reason otherwise for altering the order of this *Sacrament*, as God knows 'tis plain they have not any at all; yet this would still remain a perpetual Exception against it, That our Saviour here expressly *commands* them to *Do this*, i.e. that which himself then did in *Remembrance of Him*; Who gave the *Wine* as well as *Bread* to his *Apostles*, and repeated the *Command* after the one, as well as the other; and not what they should at any time after think fitting to do.

And these are such consequences as
con-

concern *others* rather than *our selves*; who, God be thanked, are again delivered from all these Corruptions, and have no otherwise any cause to remember them, than as they serve to confirm us in our Pure and Holy Doctrine and Practice in this matter, and ought to raise up our Souls to a grateful acknowledgment of God's Mercy to us, who has freed us from such great and dangerous Errors, and in which he still permits so many others to continue. But there are yet some other Conclusions to be drawn from the foregoing Reflections, and in which we may perhaps find somewhat that will be of a more near and direct concern to us. For,

5. If our *Saviour Christ* has here commanded us, to *Do this in Remembrance of Him*; that is, to come to the *Holy Table*, and receive this blessed *Sacrament*, and make our publick and solemn Acknowledgments to him for his great Mercy in *dying* for us; What then shall we say of those who despising this sacred Ordinance, do either totally absent themselves from this *Memorial*, or come but very seldom and negligently to it.

This

This certainly must needs be a great fault, as it is evidently contrary to the exprefs Command of our *Saviour* in the *Text* before us. And if we may make any Judgment of Christ's resentment of it, either from the Nature of the thing it self, or from the severe Punishment God threatned unto those in the *Old Testament*, who should neglect the like *Memorial* of the *Paschal Feast*, one of the greatest Provocations any Christian can almost be guilty of.

Heb. x. 29.

If we consider the thing it self, what does he who despises this *Holy Sacrament*, and neglects to partake of it, but in effect despise *Christ* himself, and tread under foot the Blood of the *Covenant* by which we must be saved? And how can that Soul expect any benefit of his *Death* and *Sufferings*, for his *forgiveness* hereafter, who now will not vouchsafe so much as to make that common Acknowledgment which every Christian ought of his remembrance of it, or shew any sense of his Obligation, though we have here so plain and peremptory a Command to do it?

And

And if we look to the Denuntiati-
of the *Old Testament*, against those who
should thus neglect to joyn in the
Jewish Passover, and shew forth this
remembrance of the deliverance which
that *Feast* referr'd to, we may, I think,
have some cause to fear, how much
greater shall be our Punishment, whose
neglect is certainly, upon many ac-
counts, much more inexcusable than
theirs. *If any man* (says *Moses*) *Deut.*
xii. 15. shall eat leavened-bread in that
time, that Soul shall be cut off from
Israel: But more expressly, *Numb. ix. 3:*
He that is clean, and is not on a journey,
and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even
the same Soul shall be cut off from his
People. Whatever the meaning of that
Excision be which God here threatned
that People with; whether it be, that
such a one should have no part in the
World to come, as some interpret it;
or, that God would cut him off by an
untimely temporal death, as others: Or
lastly, which was esteemed by them
no small *Curse*, that he should die
childless, and have his name put out in
Israel. This is certain that the Denun-
tiation is very severe; and, if the Re-
mark of a very learned * *Rabbin* be

* Aben-
Ezra. vid.
Fag. in
Exod. xii.

F f

true, 15.

true, almost *particular* to the thing in hand ; there being but *two* of all the *affirmative Precepts* to which God made this Denuntiation, *viz.* to him that neglected the first *Sacrament*, of *Circumcision* ; and this second, of the *Passover*.

But perhaps it will here be said, That this Commination was to those that were *clean*, and *near at hand*, and yet neglected this *Holy Institution* : And therefore ought not to be applied to them, with reference to the *Blessed Sacrament* which we are speaking of, who would gladly *receive* it, and have a very honourable *remembrance* in their hearts of the Death of *Christ* ; but alas ! either they *are not clean*, or *are in a journey* ; either they *are not prepared*, or have not the *leisure* to come to this *Table*.

'Tis true indeed, God did here restrain the Judgment I have mention'd, to such as were *clean*, and at or near to *Jerusalem* ; but the rest were not therefore by any means excused, and permitted to neglect the partaking of it. They had time given them till the next *Month*, to *cleanse* themselves, and to come up to *Jerusalem* ; and if they neglected in the *second Month* to keep the

the *Feast*, after having omitted it in the *first*, there was then no farther Provision for them, but they fell under the *Curse* of those who neglected altogether to eat of it.

And this therefore may serve for a useful Admonition, as well as full Answer to the Excuses of those, who are still pretending they are not *worthy* to come to this *Sacrament*, or else have not *time* and *leisure* to prepare themselves for it. If indeed this should chance by any accident to hinder them at this *time*, or on this *occasion*, from receiving of it; they ought not therefore to disquiet themselves, but to believe, that in such a case our *Saviour Christ* will make the same allowance for this *Feast*, that God did for that other; and permit them yet another Month to remove the Obstacle, and prepare themselves to come to his *Table*. But if instead of doing this, they shall still go on to insist upon these vain Pretences, and live so as not to be *worthy* to receive the *Holy Sacrament*, and continue to *live so* still, without taking any care to put themselves into a better *state*; this will prove an *aggravation* of their *Sin*, not a *lessening* of it;

Ff 2

and

and their neglect will be but the more *inexcusable*, for being grounded on a reason so contrary not only to the design of this *Holy Sacrament*, but of the whole *Christian Religion*. But,

Sixthly, And to close all: The *Command* of our *Saviour* in these words we have been so long considering, will not only oblige us in the general, sometimes to *remember* his *Death*, by *receiving* this *Holy Sacrament*, but *frequently* and *oftentimes* so to do.

I have before observed, that the word which we here render *Remembrance*, does not imply a bare *Memorial*, but a renew'd *Commemoration*; to teach us, that we are often to *refresh* the *Memory* of *Christ's Death* in our minds by this Sacred *Solemnity*, and to *repeat* again and again the *Remembrance* of it. And though it be pretty hard to say, how often a Man ought to receive the *Sacrament*; yet 'tis plain, he is not so zealous a Christian as he should be, that very seldom or never does it.

We

We know that in the first *Ages* of *Christianity*, when Devotion was *quick* and *vigorous*, and Men had the most sensible impressions upon their minds of the *love* of our *Saviour*, in giving himself to *die* for us, that then they received it ordinarily *every day*: Inasmuch that some of those *Fathers* who then lived, have interpreted this *Encharistical Bread*, to be that *daily Bread* which our *Lord* has taught us to *pray* for. Afterwards, as Mens *Zeal* cool'd, so did their *frequent Communicating* decay in proportion with it. At first it fell in some *Churches* to *four*, in others to *three* times in the *Week*; and in a little while it came to be the distinctive Devotion of the *Lord's days*: And at last, the necessary, least *proportion* established was, the three great *Feasts* of the *Year*, in which our *Church* still obliges all her Members to partake of it.

But as he who is in a pure and holy *state*, can never *receive* it too *often*; so certainly it is a thing than which none would more advance our *Piety*, to labour as frequently as we can, to fit our selves for it. And since it has pleased God, to revive something of

the *Primitive Zeal* among us as to this particular, in bringing our Solemn *Communion*s to a *monthly* course, besides other extraordinary occasions of it; I do not see what better Exhortation I can leave with you as to this Matter, than seriously to advise, and earnestly beseech every one of you, to *examine* and *prepare* your selves, then at least, to joyn with your *Brethren* in these *Holy returns*; and not deprive your Souls of the Benefits which are thus graciously offered to you in this great and most useful *Remembrance*.

This will indeed both best answer the *design* of our Blessed *Lord* in the *Text*, and be the best Application, I could even wish you would make of my Discourse upon it. But then I must observe, that I speak now by way of *Exhortation*, not as necessarily requiring this in Obedience to the *Command* before us, but as the improvement I desire, if it were possible, you might all make of those Opportunities God is pleased here to reach out to you in order to this End; and which I do not see how any good Christian can with a good Conscience so frequently neglect.

In

In the mean time, this is the *summ* of all ; He that despises this *Institution*, does not only shew a light esteem of the Death of *Christ*, and do violence to the *Command* of his *Saviour* ; but does moreover deprive his Soul of the most excellent assistance God has given us in this World, in order to our Salvation in the next : Whereas he who comes *frequently*, and with that due *Preparation* he ought to it, will not only put himself out of all danger from the *Precept* before us, but will in a little while secure himself of such a measure of the *Grace* and *Favour* of his *Redeemer*, whose *Memory* he here honours, as shall carry him through all the *Temptations*, the *Sorrows*, the *Afflictions* of this *Life*, to an *Eternal* Enjoyment of *Glory*, *Honour*, and *Immortality* in the next :

And to which God of his infinite Mercy vouchsafe to bring us all, for the same his Son Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord, Amen.

1875
1876
1877
1878

OF THE
Honour due to the Blessed Virgin :
A
S E R M O N
Preached on
Lady Day,
MARCH xxv. 1688.

LUKE I. 48, 49.

For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed: for he that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is his name.

THese Words are part of that Magnificat or Song of Thanksgiving which the Blessed Virgin made to God, in return of that wonderful Favour He had vouchsafed unto her, in esteeming

esteeming her worthy to become the *Mother* of our *Lord*. And they contain in them a kind of *Prophecy* of that *Honour* which the *Christian Church* should in all *Ages* to come pay to her *Memory* upon the account of it.

It is the *Observation* of our *English Rhemists* in their *Annotations* upon this *Place*; “*That this Prophecy is fulfilled in*” their keeping her *Festival Days*, and “*saying the Ave Marie, and other Holy*” *Anthems* of our *Lady*. And that the “*Calvinists* therefore (so they are pleased to stile us) “for not doing of this, are “not among these *Generations* which “call our *Lady Blessed*. And in their *Marginal Note* on the same *Passage*, they very briskly ask this *Question*; “*Have* “the *Protestants* had always *Generations* “to fulfil this *Prophecy*? Or do they call “her *blessed* that derogate what they can “from her *Graces, Blessing*, and all her “*Honour*?

In answer to so ignorant or so malicious a *Calumny*, and to shew that We, tho’ we neither say any *Ave-Maries* to her *Honour*, nor are engaged in any other part of that unwarrantable *Superstition* whereby they have so long dishonoured *God*, abused the *Blessed Virgin*,
and

and scandalized the *Church of Christ*, have yet as just an *Esteem* for the Holy *Mother of our Lord*, and proclaim her *Blessedness* as much as either this *Prophecy* requires, or any sober Orthodox Christian may be allowed to do it; I shall crave leave to make use of that *Occasion*, the Solemnity of this Day offers to me, to enter on the Comparison between our selves and them. And could I be assured, That the *Blest above* have this *Honour from God*, to be made acquainted with these solemn Exercises of their *Brethren* here below; I would not doubt to appeal to the Holy *Virgin* her self to judge betwixt us; Who they are that do the most truly honour her, We who freely pay her all that *Love*, that *Respect*, that *Glory*, that any *Creature* in her *Circumstances* can possibly be thought capable of: Or they who by giving her more, raise her up to a *State* above the *Condition* of her *Nature*; and so instead of honouring her, dishonour that *Son* whom she was so happy as to bring into the World; and that *God*, who thought her worthy of so great an Exaltation.

Now in order to this End, I shall observe this following Method:

I. I will

I. I will shew what that *Honour* is which the *Blessed Virgin* is now capable of Receiving, and which accordingly we our selves this *Day* pay to her *Memory*?

II. I will lay before you some Instances of that *Additional Worship*, which those of the other *Church* pretend is due to her.

III. I will offer some of those *Reasons* for which we think such a *Worship* to be *unlawful*, and therefore refuse to give it to her.

I.

I begin with the *first* of these,

I. What that *Honour* is which the *Blessed Virgin* is now capable of receiving, and which accordingly we our selves pay to her *Memory*?

For answer to which Enquiry, I shall lay down this *plain*, and I suppose, undeniable *Foundation*; *viz.* That how ever some have been pleased to exalt the
Glories

Glories and Prerogatives of the Holy MART to a very great, indeed to an *extravagant* Degree, so as hardly to leave any Comparison between her and any other *Creature*, whether in *Heaven* or *Earth*; yet since they still confess her to be but a *meer Creature*, the Measure we must take whereby to judge, What *Honour* may warrantably be paid to her, must be, to consider, What *Honour* any *meer Creature*, in her *Circumstances*, is capable of receiving: And then, I presume it cannot be justly said, That we are not of the number of those who call the *Holy Virgin-Blessed*; who upon this Foundation do freely profess, That providing only for that just Distance that ought to be observed between the *Adoration* that we owe to *God*, and that *Honour* which we may be allowed to give to a *Creature*; there is no Respect that we think too great to be given to her: Nor will we scruple to pay her any *Honour* that does not entrench upon our *Piety*, and confound the *Service of God* and his *Creatures together*.

Were the *Blessed Virgin* yet present upon *Earth* with us, we would soon convince those our *Accusers* that we thought no *Respect* too much for her, which either
they

they or we are wont to give to the *greatest Saints* yet on *Earth*. Now that she is departed from us, all we can do is to follow her with our *Esteem*, our *Praise*, and our *Imitation*: That is, To give her *all* that *Honour* which any *Creature* in the same *Circumstances* is fit to receive, or which it may be either *Lawful* or *Reasonable* for us to offer to such a one.

* See the Instances of all the following Particulars in the 2^d Def. of the Expos. of the Doctr. of the Church of England: part 2. artic. 3. Of the Invocation of Saints.

Luk. 1. 46, 47.

We *pray* not indeed to her now, nor would we do it if she were still on *Earth*, and we were sure she could *hear* and *know* our *Requests*: Because *Prayer* we look upon to be an *Act* of *Religious Worship*, and therefore such as is *proper* to *God only*. But we *Bless* *God* for the *Honour* he vouchsafed unto her, when he made her the *Mother* of *our Lord*; with the *Angel*, we pronounce her *Blessed among Women*; and that in that very *Form* which she her-self set us for our *Pattern*; And so every *Day* fulfil her *Prophecy*, whilst we cry out with her to *God Almighty*, *My Soul doth magnifie the Lord, and my Spirit rejoyceth in God my Saviour, in that he regarded the lowliness of his Handmaiden.*

We *intreat* her not to *pray* for us, because we cannot tell how to convey our *Requests* to her: And tho' for ought we know

know God might reveal them unto her; yet since he has no where promised that he will do this, nor encouraged us to call upon her to this End; we think we cannot in this manner pray to her without either *great Folly*, or *great Impiety*: Without *great Folly*; if not believing that she do's certainly some way or other *understand* our *Requests*, we yet nevertheless address to her: Without *great Impiety*; if in confidence that she has such an Ability, we ascribe the most peculiar *Prerogatives* of God to her, viz. *Immensity*, *Omniscience*, *Omnipresence*; and so make her every way *equal with God*

But were she now upon *Earth*, where we could either speak to her our selves, or otherwise entertain any certain *Correspondence* with her; we should be far from discouraging any to beg the *Benefit* of her *Prayers*, or thinking them worthy of *Censure* for so doing.

When we stand at our Altars and celebrate the blessed *Sacrament* of the *Body* and *Blood* of *Christ*, and set forth the *Lord's* 1 Cor. xi. death until his coming: We cannot indeed allow our selves to do this to the *Honour* and *Veneration* of any other, than of him only whose *Death* and *Passion* we commemorate. But even here also

we

we do the utmost that we can to *Honour* her. We *name* her at the *Holy Table*, we recite there the *History* of God's Favour to her, and *magnifie* him with her upon the account of it.

In a Word; when we *confess* our *Sins* and *absolve* our *Penitents*; if we *commend* either our *selves* or *others* to *God's Mercy*: In these and the like Cases, we think it an *Impiety* to joyn the *Daughter of Anna*, with the *great God*, the *Lord of Heaven and Earth*.

If we *give Thanks* for any *Blessings* we have received; we chuse rather to follow her *Example*, and cry out with her, *My Soul doth magnifie the Lord*, and *my spirit rejoyceth in God my Saviour*; than with others to divide the *Glory* between *God* and her, and say, *Glory be to JESUS and MART*.

If we *vow a Vow unto the Lord*, or *swear by his Name*; we neither think it fitting nor lawful to joyn *God* and the *Blessed Virgin* together; lest we should thereby seem to make her the *Searcher of Hearts* as well as him; and a powerful *Avenger* of such *secret Sins*.

If we *speak of Her*; we readily give her any *Attribute* that either the *holy Scripture* warrants, or her *Nature* allows of.

of. But to call *her* a *Goddeſs*, and *our ſelves* her *Suppliants*; to ſtyle her *Queen of Heaven*, and *Mother of Divine Grace*; the *Refuge of Sinners*, and the *Ark of the Covenant*; the *Sovereign Lady of Angels*,
Archangels, *Patriarchs*, *Prophets*, *Apoſtles*, *Martyrs*, *Confefſors* and *all Saints*; and, as ſuch, beſeech her, That *ſhe* and *her Son* would *bleſs* us; this we think is to carry the Complement too far; and a Strain much fitter for ſome *poetical Heathen Goddeſs*, than for a *Chriſtian Saint*.

See the Li-
 tanies of
 the Bl.
 Virg.

But let theſe and the like *Superſtitious* be laid aſide, and which a *Virgin* ſo *humble on Earth*, cannot ſure be ſuppoſed to be ſo much altered for the worſe, as to aſpire after in *Heaven*; let *Religion* and the *Worſhip* of that be exempted, as the peculiar Due of that *God* who made both *her* and *us*, and whom alone both *ſhe* and all of us therefore ought to *adore*, and then what farther remains to proclaim her *Bleſſed*, ſhall as freely be allowed and paid her by us, as it can be juſtly claimed of us.

Now the *ſum* of all ſuch *Honour* may be referred by us to theſe two *general Conſiderations*.

1. Of that just *Esteem* and *Value* and Opinion we have of her : And,
2. Of *Actions* suitable to such *Opinions*.

As for the former of these,

1. That *Esteem* and *Value*, and *Opinion* we have of her ;

It is certainly as great as any sober Christian can desire it should be. We believe her to have been a most *pure*, and *holy*, and *virtuous* Creature : That her *virgin Mind* was clean and spotless, as her *Body Chast* and *immaculate* ; and that she was upon the Account of both the most fit of any of all her Race or Sex for the *Holy Ghost* to overshadow, and for the *Son of the most Highest* to inhabit. When we consider the *firmness* of her *Faith* ; the *fervour* of her *Devotion* ; the excellency of her *Humility* ; we cannot but acknowledge a *Grace* extraordinary in her, working all those *eminent* and *Divine Qualities*. And tho' we are not so curious as to enter on those *nicer Speculations* in which so many have in vain exercised

The Twelfth Sermon.

451

exercised themselves, Whether she was *Conceived in Sin*? And if she was, How far it was *restrained in her* at first; and at *what instant* totally extinct in her afterwards? Whether she was *sanctified* in the *Womb* of her *Mother*? And to what *degree*? And at what *time*? Whether *before* she was *Animated*, or *after*? And, Whether this *Sanctification* was such as to keep her from ever *committing* any, so much as *Venial Sin*? Yet as the common condition of Mankind does not permit us without all warrant from *Holy Scripture*, which they confess is here wanting to them, to *exempt* her from *all Sin*; so neither do we pretend to *excuse* her of any.

And for her *present state*, we do not at all question, but that God who shewed her such favour on Earth, hath also very highly exalted her in Heaven: So that among all the Race of *Adam*, next unto him who was *God* as well as *Man*, we think it very probable that she has obtain'd the chiefest place in *God's Kingdom*, who brought forth the *Son of God* into the World.

And here then let these our *Accusers*, who say that we are not of the number of those of whom the Blessed *Virgin*

in my Text prophesied, That, *Behold, from thenceforth all Generations should call her Blessed*, tell us, if they can: Wherein is it that we are *defective* in our *Opinion* concerning the *Mother* of our *Lord*?

Is it that we deny her *Immaculate Conception*, and suppose her to have in this been submitted to the common condition of *all others* since the Fall of our *first Parents*, *Christ* only excepted? But then they must not forget, that this is no more than what their own Brethren of their own Infallible Church deny as *stifly* as we do. And if there have been *Saints*, and *Popes*, and *Visions*, and *Miracles* for it; yet we know there have been also *Saints*, and *Popes*, and *Visions*, and *Miracles* against it too: And at this day there is *Order* against *Order*, *School* against *School*, about it: And as if the *Spirit* of *Infallibility* had in this Matter forsaken their *Church*, it could never yet be finally determined either by *Council* or *Pope*, which Side is in the right.

Is it that we suspend our selves as to the Point of her *Actual Sins*? And see no cause to conclude, why the Blessed *Virgin*, though a most *pure* and

and *holy Creature*, yet should not have been as capable of *committing Sins*, as well as all others, *Christ* only excepted here also, we think must be allowed to be? But yet in this we do but follow some of the greatest Lights in the *Primitive Church*; and Reason according to the common Condition of Mankind, and from which they themselves cannot produce us any Authority of Holy Scripture to exempt her. And if some among us have, with (a) *St. Chrysostom*, freely supposed, That in some cases she did *ἀνδραμίβν η̄ πύξεν*, yet in the very Instances to which they refer, they have, at least probable, grounds for what they say: And for the most part we are contented with (b) *St. Austin*, to *suspend ourselves*; and for the honour of our *Saviour*, not to enter into any question at all concerning her as to this matter, *whether she ever did actually sin or no?*

(a) *Chrysost.*
in *Joan.*
Hom. 17.
pag. 132.
133. *Edit.*
G.L. Paris.
1633.
(b) *August.*
de Nat. &
Grat. c. 25.
p. 284. b.
Ed. Lugd.
1664. *T.m.*
7.

Or now, that God has taken her up into Glory: Have we not all that high and worthy Opinion of her *Exaltation* that we ought to have, because indeed we freely profess we cannot believe such *extravagant Romances* as all

sober Men, even of their own Church, are ashamed of?

Contempl.
vii. pag.
78, &c.

We doubt not but she is at this time in Heaven; Do we ever the more debase her, because we will not entertain a *shameless Legend* of her *Assumption* thither?

Contempl.
viii. pag.
89, &c.

We are persuaded, that she is adorn'd with one of the brightest *Aureole's* in *God's Kingdom*; That her *Crown* is more *Illustrious*, than any among the Daughters of *Eve*. Is not this sufficient, unless we will undertake to tell you what her *Crown* was made of, how many *Stars* went into her *Atchievement*, what *Badges* her Servants wore, and what *Speeches* and *Complements* were made to her upon the occasion; and to compleat all, set forth in *perspective* all the *Holy Trinity* concurring in this *Ceremony*; and all the *Powers of Heaven and Earth* singing *Praises* to *Her*, and *adoring* of *Her*.

Offic. B.
Virg. Ant.
v. p. 1631.
pag. 81.

We make no question, but that as she was very highly *favour'd* by *God* on *Earth*, so is she now no less *beloved* by him in *Heaven*. But should we therefore set her up as another *Mediatrice*, that as both *Sexes* concurr'd to our *Ruin*, so might both concur to

Cræfft. De-
not. enuers
la ste V.
part. 1. pag.
10, 30,
31, &c.

our

our Reparation ; and so tye up the Hands of God, as not to allow any to be *saved*, but according to Her Will. Nay, make her so far the *Queen* of *Heaven* and *Earth*, as to give her a Power of all the Grace that is to be bestowed on Mankind : Of *saving* her *Votaries*, if they do but sufficiently *love* and *worship* Her, whatever their *Affections* or their *Service* be to God *Almighty* : Of fetching *Souls* not only out of *Purgatory*, but even from *Hell* it self, by her *Authority* : Of ordering all the *Events* of the *Fortunes* of *Men* and *Kingdoms*, insomuch that not a *Battel* can be *fought*, or a *Victory* obtain'd, but by the favour of this *Pallas*, to whom the Success is due, and to whom the Praise and Honour therefore ought to be return'd. These indeed are the *Extravagancies* of some of our *Adversaries*, but God forbid they should ever be the *Practice* or *Opinions* of any among us.

To conclude ; It is impossible for any to entertain more honourable Sentiments of the *Blessed Virgin* than we do, who will not run out into *Blasphemy* and *Fanaticism*, and believe such things as neither *Scripture* nor *Antiquity* have

deliver'd, nor will either *Piety* or *common Sense* suffer us to receive.

Let us see,

Secondly, Whether our *Actions* be not every way suitable to our *Opinions*?

Now for this I must observe, according to my *Foundation* before laid down, That the *Holy Virgin*, however *highly exalted by God*, being yet still but a meer *Creature*, our *Actions* towards her must be no other than what a *Creature* that is at such a vast distance from us, and out of all compass of *Civil Communication*, is capable of receiving. And so the *sum* of what may warrantably be paid to her, will fall under these *Three Generals*:

First, To celebrate the *Memory* of those *Blessings* and *Favours* which it has pleased God to bestow upon her.

Secondly, To return *Praises* to God on the account of them. And,

Thirdly, To endeavour what in us lies to *imitate* her *Excellencies*.

This

This is all the *Honour* she is capable of receiving from us ; and it cannot be doubted, but that we are as careful as any to fulfil the *Prophecy* of our *Text* in every one of these *Particulars*.

First, We celebrate the *Memory* of those *Blessings* and *Favours* which it has pleased God to bestow upon her.

Let this *day*, and the other Solemn *Festivals* we observe to the same End, be our Witness, how careful we are as to this particular. We mark it out in our *Rituals*, as a Day *Holy* unto the *Lord* : We assemble in our *Sacred* places, solemnly to recount what the *Holy Scriptures* have recorded of *God's Mercies* to Her : And *annually*, as at this *time*, we encourage one another to *blefs* and *praise Him* upon the account of them.

But here the *Objection* made in the beginning, will rise against us. 'Tis true indeed, we do observe some of her *Festivals* ; but yet we pass by the greater part of them : And for the main thing of all, we quite omit it, in that we say not AVE MARIA so often, and so impertinently as they do ; not
other

other *Anthems* of our *Lady*, as they call her by a new and phantastical *Title*, never given her either in *Scripture*, or by any of the ancient *Fathers*.

This we confess is in some measure true : We say no *Ave Marie's*, *i. e.* after the manner that they do ; nor can we imagin what *Honour* is done to the *Blessed Virgin*, by the *nauseous tautologie* of a *Salutation*, pertinent in its season, when the *Angel* spoke to her upon her *Conception* ; but now as *unseasonable* in the *Application*, as it is *vain* and *absurd* in the *Repetition*. But yet when we recite the *History*, and celebrate the *Memory* of that surprising *Salutation*, then we read it in our *Assemblies* ; that is, we do say *Ave Maria*, as often as 'tis either pious or to the purpose to do it. And if for not doing it as they do, we are to be excluded out of the Number of those of whom our *Text* speaks ; yet God be thanked we shall run but the same *Fortune* that the *Apostles* and the *primitive Ages* of the *Church* did, before it was first, as they tell us, revealed to *St. Dominick*, and by him to the *Church*, how they were to recite the *Rosary*.

But

But now for the other Instances objected against us, *viz.* The *Feast*, and *Anthems* of our *Lady*; in these we may venture to justify our selves: We celebrate the Memory of all the great Particulars that we know of her *Life*: And if upon the meer *Authority* of *Fables*, confess'd to be *uncertain*, and *disputed* by many among themselves, as not fit to be *credited*, we cannot be induced to observe more; yet in this we hope all sober *Christians* will acquit us, and esteem us to be very excusable in what we do: It being certainly to *mock*, not *honour*, both *God* and *Her*, solemnly to *commemorate*, and seriously to *thank* God for such Blessings as at the same time we are sure *He* never bestowed upon *Her*, nor *She* ever receiv'd from *Him*.

As to the last Instance, our not *reciting* the *Anthems* of our *Lady*, I shall only say thus much, That we know but of one *Anthem* that ever she made; *viz.* that from whence our *Text* is taken; and that we are so far from not *reciting*, that we make it a Solemn *Hymn* in our daily *Service*. Let them who *recite* more, tell us, if they can, whence they had them, and by what
Authority

Authority they make use of *Anthems* in many places hardly to be heard without *horror*; and such as, to say no worse of them, do by no means besit either the *Humility* of MARY, to receive; or the *Piety* of a good *Christian*, to offer to her.

And this may suffice to shew that we are not wanting in the first point of our *Honour*, to celebrate the *Memory* of God's *Mercies* to her. The next proposed, was,

Secondly, To return *Praises* to God upon the account of them.

And here I am sure no one can say that we are defective: The *Foundation* of all God's *particular Favours* to her being this, That our *Blessed Lord* was to be born of *Her*. And this is the Subject of all our *Praises* to him: Every *Thanksgiving* we put up to Heaven, is *begun, carried on, and ended* with it: So that in effect, all that part of our *Religious Service* which consists in giving *Thanks* to God for the *Redemption of Mankind*, is but a continued Acknowledgment of the *Honour* and *Favour* done to the *Holy MARY*:
And

And if this be not enough, I must then again remember what I just now observed, not only that we are very careful to *praise* God for his *Mercies* to the *Blessed Virgin*, and to *our selves* by her; but every day make use of *her own words* to express our grateful Acknowledgment of them, by establishing *her Song of Eucharist* to be the *Form* wherein we *our selves* should give Thanks to God in our *Assemblies*.

And then,

Thirdly, For what is the last Instance of all, of that *Honour* we owe to her, the *Imitation* of her *Vertues*.

We may presume to say, that in this we do not come behind her highest *Votaries*. Not an *Act* of *Piety* recorded in *her Life*, but our *Church* exhorts us to transcribe it into *ours*. We may, and God knows we do, come very much short of her in our *practice*: But 'tis our own *Infirmity*, not any *defect* in our *Churches Doctrine* and *Directions* that we do so.

Such

Such then is the *Honour* which we now suppose due to the *Blessed Virgin*, and which accordingly we pay to Her. Let us go on, and see in the next place,

II.

Secondly, What that additional *Worship* is, which those of the other *Church* pretend is due to Her.

And because I would *state* the difference as clearly as I could, I will consider this *Point* in the *same two parts* I did the foregoing:

I. Of their *farther Esteem* in their *Opinions* of Her.

II. Of their *Practices* in conformity to their *Opinions*.

For the former of these:

First, Their *Opinions* of the *Blessed Virgin*.

It is hardly to be imagined, to what prodigious *Excesses* some Mens *Superstition*

Devotion hath carried them as to this particular. I have before mentioned some of the *glorious Titles* by which they call her, in their *very publick Addresses* to her : Should I to these add the Sentiments of some particular Men in these later Ages, famous in their *Generation*, and for nothing more famous, than for their extraordinary *Devotion* to the *Holy Mary*, I should soon run beyond the bounds of such a Discourse as this. I will rather chuse here to confine my self to a very few, and those only *general Remarks*. And,

First, It is the very foundation of all that *Superstitious Service* which is now-a-days paid to her in the Church of *Rome*, to suppose the *Excellency* of the *Blessed Virgin* to be incomparably above that of any other *Saint* whatsoever : So that whereas all other *Saints* are to be worshipped only with that *inferior Religious Worship* which they call *Dulia* ; the *Blessed Virgin* alone is to be served with a *Hyperdulia*, or a Super-eminent sort of *Religious Service*. And that upon these three accounts, which therefore one of their own *Authors* has set down for us : (1.) In that
when

Contempl.
on the Life
and Glory
of H. M.
P. 4.

when "God dignified her with the Excellency of being the Mother of JESUS, he therewith created her the Queen of Angels, Patroness of the Church, and Advocate of Sinners; And that therefore as such she ought to be honoured above them. (2.) "Because the Veneration we give to MARY, redounds to JESUS; all Honour given to the Mother, tending to the Glory of the Son. And, (3.) For that Holy MARY, as the Mother of God, is accomplished with all Natural, Moral, and Supernatural Perfections, which are and possibly may be dispersed among all pure Creatures, Men and Angels; and therefore as she is more Holy and Perfect than All, so is she acceptable to God above All; and therefore ought she to be revered by us above them All. From hence it is,

Secondly, That they look upon her as a Person most worthy to be called upon in all their Devotions: Inasmuch that the Author I but now mentioned, recommending to his *Votary* the practice of Piety towards her, lays down, among others, these Two Rules: (1.) That he should have a private Oratory dedicated

Ibid. p. 13.

cated to the *Veneration* of Holy *MART*:

"And (2.) That he should not enter *Contempl.*
 "on any Business, of what ever Nature, pag. 15.

"without first consulting *MARY* by

"humble Prayer; recommending its whole

"Progress to her Protection, and assuming

"her as a Guide in the pursuance thereof.

And indeed tho' they do as they have

occasion, pray to other *Saints* too as well as

to the *Blessed Virgin*, yet such a peculiar

Confidence have they in her, that in all

their publick and private *Addresses*, the

beginning and ending, and in a Word;

the whole Performance, for the most

part, is divided betwixt *God* and her.

Thus in the *Canon* of the *Mass*; in all

their *Liturgies*, in the most solemn Exer-

cises of *Confession*, *Absolution*, *Thanks-*

giving; in their *Litanies* and *salves*, still

Holy MART is set up as no small

part of their *Worship*: And the reason

whereof their *Council* of *Basil* tells us is, *Craffet de-*

for that she, as she is the most *exalted*, *vol. II. p. 15.*

so she is the most ready to regard us too: *1. p. 20, 21,*

And *Suarez* stating this very Point, *&c.*

Whether we ought to pray to the *Blessed*

VIRGIN? tells us it is a *matter* of

Faith that we ought so to do; that the

Church is sensible how much the *Inter-*

cession of the *Blessed VIRGIN* abo: a

H h

any

any others is the most useful to us; and therefore that she, *above all others*, ought to be *invoked* by us.

Now this being without Controversie, both the constant *Opinion* and *Practice* of the *Church of Rome*, That the *Blessed Virgin* is to be called upon in *all Places*, and *upon all Occasions*, and by *all Persons*; they must by consequence suppose,

3. That by whatsoever means it is, some way or other she do's *know*, and can *attend* to *all* the *Prayers* that are every where made to her; and is capable of affording them such Assistance as they encourage their *Votaries* to ask of *Her*: And by consequence, that she do's partake of the *Immensity* of *God*; and is *Omniscient*, *Omnipresent* and *Omnipotent* as well as he. For else, if either she cannot *distinctly attend* to *all* the *Requests* that are every where made to *her*, or be not *capable* of *knowing* them; or tho' she do's understand what is demanded of her, yet should chance not to have it in her Power to grant it to them: It must follow, That they pray at all *Adventures*; and to no more purpose than if one of us here, should ask a *Favour* of, or make

make a *Request* to one of our *Friends* and *Acquaintance* in the *Indies*. And whatsoever *Piety* there might be in so doing, yet I am perswaded the *number* of her *Votaries* would soon decrease, did they not hope for such an *Effect* of their *Addresses* to her, as must imply her to be all that which I before inferred, as the *Consequence* of their calling upon her.

4. But this is not yet all: For in calling thus upon her, they do not only suppose her to be a fit *Object* of their *Adoration*, but by committing themselves to her *Intercession* for them, they do particularly set her up as an *Advocate* or *Mediatrice* in *Heaven*, and accordingly have recourse to her as such.

'Tis true this is no more than what they do to the other *Saints* as well as the *Blessed VIRGIN*: They pray to God through their *Merits* and *Intercession*, and by their *Mediation*, as well as that of our *Saviour Christ*, both desire and hope the better to implore his *Mercy*. But then, as I before observed, That in the *Business* of their *Prayers* they look upon the *Holy MART* to have a particular *Right* to them above any other *Saints* whatsoever; so much more in

this Case, they esteem her not only to be a more effectual *Mediatrice* than any of the rest of the *Saints*, but to have a more peculiar Right to that *Title* and *Dignity*: And which from one of their own approved *Authors*, I will therefore here crave leave to explain to you.

*Crasset ver.
deu. part.
I. P. 14.*

To be a Mediator, says he, and to discharge the Office of such a one, it is requisite that he who asks any thing in that respect, should have * merited that which he desires to obtain; that he should have * offered his Merits to that end, and that God should have * accepted of them. It is this which renders Jesus Christ, our only and true Mediator. But the *Saints* have not * merited any Good for us during this Life, they have not * offered to God their Merits in favour of us, nor has God * accepted them to any such End. 'Tis the Blessed Virgin alone that has any part in this Glory with her Son; * For she obtains nothing for us but what she merited during her Life: — * She has also offered all her Actions and Sufferings joyntly with those of Jesus Christ for the Salvation of all Men; * And God has accepted this Offering, as S. Bonaventure and other Divines teach. And again—She is therefore our *Mediatrice*, inasmuch as she

Ibi.

She offered her Son *freely and voluntarily* to the Death, for the Salvation of Mankind.

Such is the *Title* which they suppose the *Holy MARY* has to be our *Advocate*, not only *above* all other *Saints*, but in the *same manner* that our *Saviour Christ* himself is : and the consequence of it appears in these two *Advantages* which they imagine to be in her *Mediation* above that of any other *Saint* : viz. first, " That it is *more extensive* : The *Crasset ib.* *Merits* of the *Saints* are limited to *certain Graces*, to *certain Countries*, and to *certain Persons*. But the *Blessed Virgin* is a *universal Cause*, the virtue of which extends over all *Places*, in all *Times*, to all sorts of *Goods* or *Evils*, and to all sorts of *Persons*. Her *Charity* is in some sort *infinite*, and has neither *Bounds* nor *Measure*. Secondly, That it is *more efficacious*. The *Saints* are not *always heard*, nor do they *always obtain* what they desire. But the *Blessed VIRGIN* obtains whatsoever she demands. And her *Quality* of *MOTHER* gives her a *Power* in some manner, to *alter the Decrees of Providence it self*. Info- *Crasset, p.* much that *Suarez* doubted not to say, *15, 16.* *Suarez.* *tom. 2. in 3.* *disp. 23* *ask §. 2.* *That should all the Saints of Paradise*

See Lucians
Dialog.
Mars and
Mercury.

ask one thing of God, and the Virgin Mary alone oppose it; or should she demand any Favour, and all the Saints be set against it, her Interest alone would carry it against them all, upon the account of that Prerogative which is due to her Dignity as Mother, to the excellence of her Grace, and to the Perfection of her Charity.

And thus one would think they had given her a sufficient *Authority* in the *Court of Heaven*; and yet we must go one step farther: For,

5. If we may conclude any thing either from the *Tenour* of those *Addresses* that even by publick *Authority* are made to her in that *Church*; or from the open *Declarations* of some of the chiefest Persons that have been in the *Roman Communion*, She has even her self Power to *Remit Sins*, and to *Confer Grace*, and to *Save* those who *call upon her*, and trust to her for their *Salvation*.

For the former of these their *publick Addresses* to Her: What else can we make of them, but that they are plain Suppositions of such an *Authority* in her, as I have now observed. If they *confess* their *Sins*; they do it not only to
God,

God, but to the *Blessed Virgin* too: If they *absolve* their *Penitents*, the *Merits* of the *Mother* are joyned to the *Passion* of the *Son* for their *Forgiveness*. If they pray, it is that *Mary* and her *Son* would bless them: If they salute her, the *Complement* is, *Hail Queen, Mother of Mercy*, our *Life*, our *Sweetness*, and our *Hope*, all hail. *We miserable Children of Eve*, send forth our *Cries* to you; to you we sigh, weeping and groaning in this *Valley of Misery*: Go to therefore O our *Advocate*, and turn those *merciful Eyes* of yours towards us, and make us after this our *Exile* to see *Jesus* the *blessed Fruit* of your *Womb*. Amen. In short, such is their *Extravagance* as to this *Matter*, that I scarce know any one part of their *Religious Service*, the *Sacrifice* of the *Mass* only excepted, and even that too they offer to her *Honour*, and in her *Veneration*, in which they do esteem her worthy an equal share not with our *Saviour Christ* himself, and therefore in reason ought to suppose the same *Power* in her, as they do in him, seeing they worship them both alike.

H h 4

And

The Twelfth Sermon.

And for the *Opinions* of their *learned Men*, in conformity to this *Superstition*, I should be infinite should I repeat the one half of their *Excesses*. I will offer to you a short *Specimen* of the *Questions* only which a late *Author* among them has stated with great *Approbation*, and from thence leave you to judge of the rest. * Whether to be devoted to the *Blessed VIRGIN* be not a Mark of a Man's *Predestination*? And tho' without a *particular Revelation* no one can, according to their *Doctrine*, be sure that he is of the number of the *predestinate*; yet as they allow that there are certain *Marks* whereon to found a *probable Conjecture*: so among *those*, which is as much as can be said in this Case, he doubts not to place this in the first rank, to be devoted to the *Virgin MART*. Secondly, * Whether a *Christian* that is devoted to the *Blessed VIRGIN* can be damned? To which he answers roundly, That he cannot. Thirdly, * Whether *God* refuses any thing to the *Blessed VIRGIN*? And indeed we need not wonder that they are peremptory in this, that he *do's not*, when their *Church* it self calls upon her to shew her self to be a *Mother*; and once at least did pray
to

Crafft. par.
I. p. 39. 40.
Ibid. p. 54.

to her, that by the Right which she had over her Son, she would command him? Fourthly, * Whether the Blessed VIRGIN loves Sinners? i. e. so as to save them. And of this the Blessed VIRGIN her self has given us an Assurance: In this famous Revelation to one of the Saints of that Church: I am, says she, the Queen of Heaven, I am the Mother of Mercy, the Joy of the Just, and the Gate by which Sinners must go to God. And there is no Sinner so far from God, but what shall return to him and obtain Mercy, provided only that he call upon me, and put his Trust in me.

Craſſet. ib.
p. 86. Et
lib. vi. re-
velat. S.
Brigitte.

But I shall pursue these Extravagancies no farther; from what I have said we may see what their Opinions are of the Holy MART in that wherein they differ from us; viz. That she is to be honoured with a Religious Worship above any other Saint: That she is to be prayed to as an Advocate and Mediatrix in Heaven; that she has Authority to do what ever she pleases there, and in effect do's partake of the most proper and peculiar Attributes and Prerogatives of the Divinity. Let us enquire in the next place,

2. What

2. What their *Practices* are towards her, in conformity to these *Opinions*?

I shall need say the less as to this Point, having already in great measure *exhausted* it in the Account I have given of the foregoing. There is so near a *connexion* between the *Opinions* of the Church of Rome and their *Practices*, founded upon them, with reference to the *Blessed VIRGIN*, that 'tis impossible to mention the one without inferring the other as *consequent* upon it. He that saies that the *Blessed VIRGIN* ought to be *prayed* to, do's imply, That if he believes himself in what he affirms, he must then *pray* to her: And so of all the other Instances I before mentioned. But yet because this will still the more clearly shew the true state of the Difference between us, I will make a few *Reflections* upon the *Practice* of *Piety* which is found in the other Church towards the *Holy MART*, in two Considerations;

1. Of the *publick Worship* that is offered to her.

2. Of

2. Of the *private Devotion* which is usually *practised* and *recommended* by them towards the *Blessed VIRGIN*.

For the former of these,

1. The *publick Worship* that is given to *her* in the *Church of Rome*.

It runs through all the *Parts* of their *Offices*; and scarce any *holy Exercise* performed among them that is not infected with this *Superstition*.

If we consider the *publick Prayers* of the *Church*; sometimes we find the *Mass* it self said to her *Honour*; and in the very *Canon* of it, *God* is constantly desired, That for her *Merits* he would grant them the help of his *Protection*. In all their *Hours* they close with a particular *Salutation* and *Address* to her; and once every *Week*, if no more, a particular *Office* is *publickly* said to her.

Card. Bona.
de Div.
Psalm. c.
16. p. 551.

If we look into their other solemn *Acts of Devotion*; I have already observed what a *Share* she has in their *Confessions* and *Absolutions*: *Three times every Day*, at the *sound* of a *Bell*, all her

Votaries

Votaries are taught to fall down and worship her. What the *Allowance* and *Encouragements* have been to the *Practice* of her *Rosary*, and what a mighty place this *Devotion* has among them I need not say. In their solemn Sermons to the People, the *Preacher* never fails first to *invoke* the Assistance of the *Virgin MARY*, in the *angelical Salutation*: and lest Men should not by all this be sufficiently encouraged to a publick *Devotion* to her; there have been particular ways found out to carry them the more readily thereunto. 'Twas for this that the Order of the *Scapulary* was set up about 400 Years ago; and to which Men are encouraged by no less a Promise than that of a Deliverance from *Damnation* by the *Blessed Virgin*; and from *Purgatory*, by the Promises of *five* or *six* of their *Popes*.

To the same purpose, in the last Century, Pope *Gregory* the *xiiith* first, and *Sixtus* the *vth* afterwards, set up another kind of Order, the *Congregations* of the *Annunciation* to the same End: And the solemn Admission into which is made by the *Dedication* of him that enters to the Service of the *Blessed VIRGIN*, whom he there chuses to be his *Lady*, *Patroness*, and

The Twelfth Sermon.

477.

and *Advocate*, and *vows to honour, serve* Crafft. ib. 329.
and *love unto his life's end.*

I might to this add that other long *Catalogue of Superstition*; the *building of Churches*, and setting up *Altars and Images* Crafft. par. 2. trait. 6. Contempl. p. 7. &c.
to her *Honour*. Their *Pilgrimages* that are made to them; their *Litanies* and *Processions*, in which she bears no small *part* of the *Service*: The *dedicating whole Countries and Kingdoms* to her, as her own proper *Inheritance*: The *glorious Titles and Attributes* which they give her in all their *Prayers*; and many other *Instances* no less *superstitious* than these. And by all which it plainly appears, That they have too much divided their *Love, Service and Obedience*; nay their very *Faith and Hope* between *God and her*; as if the *End of Christianity* had been no less to teach us how to *magnifie the Mother*, than how to *serve and honour and believe in the Son*; and the *Duty of a Christian* were as much to set forth *her Praise*, as our *Saviour's Glory*.

But I shall stop here, and add only a *Word or two*.

2. Of

2. Of that *Private Devotion* which is usually practised by, and recommended to her *Votaries*.

Many are the *Instances* that I might offer of this, but I shall take a few only, as they lie together in the late *Directions* that have been given by one of their own *Authors* to this purpose.

Contempl.
p. 8.

1. To have a high *Value* for her *sublime Dignity*; to congratulate her in the full Possession of it, to make a publick Profession of this our high Esteem of her incomparable Perfections; and to invite others to the like Valuation of them.

iii. p. 9.

2. To express these inward Affections, by external Acts of the Worship of eminent Servitude towards her: By frequent visiting Holy Places dedicated to her Honour: By a special Reverence towards Images, representing her Person: By performing some daily Devotions containing her Praises, congratulating her Excellencies, or imploring her Mediation: And by often calling upon the sacred Name of Holy MARY.

3. By

3. By having a firm and unshaken confidence in her Patronage, amidst the greatest of our inward Conflicts with Sensuality, and outward Tribulations from the adverse Casualties of this Life. *Ibid. p. 9.*

4. By inducing enormous Sinners to this firm Confidence in the eminent Power of the MOTHER of JESUS, to redress the greatest of their Evils and Miseries by their being under her Protection. *Ibid. p. 10.*

5. By referring all the wonderful Effects of our Predestination to Glory, Election by Grace, and Redemption from sin through the Blood of JESUS, to the excellent Perfections of MARY as a most effectual means of all. *Idem ibid.*

6. By accustoming our selves to some set Form of Devotion daily to be practised in Honour of the Mother of JESUS: And, *Ibid. p. 12.*

Lastly, By entering a solemn Covenant with Holy MARY to be for ever her Servant, Client and Devote, under some special Rule, Society or Form of Life; and thereby dedicating our Persons, Concerns, Actions, *Idem ibid.*

Actions, and all the Moments and Events of our Life to JESUS under the Protection of his Divine MOTHER, chusing her to be our Adoptive Mother, Patroness and Advocate: And entrusting her with whatever we are, have or do, or Hope in Life, Death and through all Eternity.

Such is the publick and private Devotion taught by them to the *Blessed VIRGIN*. I might very much have increased the number of these *Reflections*, should I have pursued all these *Extravagancies* that they have been guilty of in this kind. For indeed, who can repeat all the *Legends* of her *Miracles*, the *Excesses* of her *Votaries*, the numerous, and too often scandalous *Stories* of her *Actions* and *Apparitions* to them? What *Kindness* she has shewn to her *Servants*, and what *Civilities* she has permitted them to shew to her? I might to these have added the *Flights* of their *Poetry*, and sometimes of their most *solemn Devotions* to her; nay, and have shewn you the *Psalms of David*; and all the high and noble *Strains of Devotion* to *God* expressed in them by a strange *Impiety*, turned all to the *Honour* of the *Virgin*

Virgin MARY: Nay the very *Creeds* of the *Church* burlesqued to her Service.

But these are things that can neither be spoken or heard by any *Christian*; without Sorrow and Indignation; at such wild and endless Freaks of Superstition; Great is the Corruption certainly of that *Church*, which not only suffers these *Abuses*, but avows and encourages them: And as we have seen at the Beginning of this Discourse, reviles us for not *believing* and *practising* such *Abominations*. But upon what just Grounds it is that we herein depart from them, if the very mention only of these Impieties be not sufficient to convince you; I shall not doubt but most plainly to shew, in my third and last Point now to be consider'd: Wherein I am

III.

Thirdly, To offer some of those *Reasons* for which we think such a *Worship* as this to be unlawful, and therefore refuse to give it to her,

I i

And

The Twelfth Sermon.

And this I shall do according to the Order I have hitherto observed,

1. With reference to their *Opinions* concerning the *Blessed VIRGIN*.
2. To their *Practices*, consequent to these *Opinions*.

I begin with the *former* of these *Considerations*.

- I. Whether the *Opinions* before mentioned, wherein those of the *Church of Rome* differ from us, as to the *Point* of *Honour* to the *Blessed VIRGIN*, be such as we may warrantably entertain of any *meer Creature*?

And because I would now reduce my *Discourse* within as narrow Bounds as the Nature of the Argument will allow of, I shall examine this Matter in three Instances only, and to which the most considerable *Differences* between us may be referred; *viz.*

1. Of her *capacity* to understand all the *Prayers* that are every where made to her.
2. Of her *Right* and *Title* to intercede for us: And
3. Of the *Reasons* and *Grounds* upon which they give her those *Titles*, and ascribe to her that *Authority*, which in their *publick Addresses* they allow to her.

And first let us enquire,

1. Whether we may warrantably ascribe to the *Blessed VIRGIN*, a *Capacity* to understand all the *Prayers* that are *every where* made to her.

It is a Subject that has long entertained the Minds and exercised the Pens of the *Votaries* of the *Virgin MARY* and the *Saints*, How or by what means it is that they understand all the *Prayers* that are any where made to them by any of their *Suppliants* on *Earth*. And I do not find that either they yet are,

or seem at all likely ever to be agreed on ~~this Point~~. But thus far they appear to be all of them well assured, That by whatever means it is, their Prayers are some way or other most certainly conveyed to them, because that otherwise it would be a most senseless and absurd Practice to call upon them.

Apol. for
the Con-
templ. p.
74, 82, 83.

Bellarmin.
de Purg.
l. ii. c. 15.

I shall not here dispute the Power of God, what he can do as to this Matter, or what, for ought I know, he may do at some Times, and on some certain Occasions; in extraordinarily revealing many of those things to the Saints above, which are done by us here below. It is plain this can be no sufficient Foundation of constant Prayer to them in all Places and on all Occasions, that God may possibly sometimes communicate some things to them: Unless we could be sure what things, and at what time, and to what Saints he did this. God may, if he please communicate what I speak here, to my Friend abroad in another part of the World. But he would hardly be thought very well in his Wits, who should on this possibility every Day in a very solemn manner intreat his Prayers, or ask some Courtesy of him.

To

To render *all* the *Prayers*, of *all* *Men*,
 at any *time*, or in any *place*, a wise
 and rational Service, *is plain they must*
 suppose that the *Saints* above, and in
 particular that the *Blessed VIRGIN*
 has a certain and distinct *knowledge* of
 all the *Actions*, *Words*, and even of
 the most *secret Thoughts*. (forasmuch
 as they allow of *Mental*, as well as
Vocal Prayer to her) of all *Men* here up-
 on Earth. But to ascribe such a Power
 to her, is to raise Her above the state
 of a *meer Creature*, to invest her with
 some of the most proper and incom-
 municable *Attributes* of *God*, and in
 effect to make, what some of them
 stick not freely to style her, a *Goddes*
 of her; which certainly cannot be done
 without a very great *Impiety*.

It is one of the great *Reasons* why
God requires the *Service* of *Prayer*
 from us, because the very *Exercise* of
 it keeps up in our minds the most
 lively *Idea's* of His *infinite Nature*,
 his *unbounded Providence*, and his in-
 comprehensible *Perfections*. Whilst by
calling every where upon him, we do
 in effect acknowledge the *Immensity* of
 the *Godhead*, which is *every where pre-*
sent: By lifting up the *Aspirations* of

*Bellarm. de
 Eccles. Tri-
 umph. l. 1.
 c. 20.*

our Hearts towards him, we profess the *Belief* of his *Omniscience*, That *he searcheth the Heart, and knoweth the secrets of all the Children of Men*: By asking all sorts of Blessings of him, whether to deliver us from any Evil, or to grant us any Good, we confess the *Sovereign Authority* of his *Providence* over us, and declare his *Omnipotence* who can do whatever he pleases, and manifest our trust and dependance upon him. In a word, By all Creatures doing this, in all places, and at the same time; we set forth the vast capacity of his *immense Nature*, that is able to attend, without distraction, at once, to all the Affairs of the World; and can, without confusion, both *hear* and *answer* whatever Requests are made to him.

But now to suppose that any *meer Creature* can do this, what is it but to confound that *infinite distance* that above all things ought the most carefully to be kept up in the Minds of Men, between God and Us: And leave no Perfection in the one so proper to him, as not to be communicable to the other? And yet however they may think fit to palliate this matter, 'tis plain,

plain, he that will *pray* with any tolerable *reason* or *confidence* to the Blessed VIRGIN, must suppose all this: He must in effect esteem her, what the very *act* of his *calling* upon her supposes her to be, *Omniscient*, *Immense*, *Omnipresent*, and even *Omnipotent* too. It being otherwise a most stupid thing for *millions of Men* every *hour* to *pray* to one who has no *power* to *hear* their *Prayers*; to offer up the *motions* of their *Souls* to one that cannot *search* or *know* their *Hearts*; and ask all manner of *Blessings* of her, who has neither *Ability* nor *Authority* to confer *any* upon them.

Now 'tis upon this ground then, that, without considering of what kind the *Requests* are that are made to the Blessed VIRGIN, we look upon the very *Act* it self of *Invocation*, to be an *Act*, indeed one of the most *proper Acts*, of *Religious Worship*, and by consequence such as ought to be paid to God only. And though they may pretend, that 'tis no more to *pray* to the Holy MARY in *Heaven*, than it would be to desire the *Prayers* or *Assistance* of some *Friend* on Earth; yet it is apparent from what I have now been speak-

The Twelfth Sermon.

ing, that there is a very *vast difference* between these two; the one supposing no *Power* or *Perfection* in our *Friend*, but what may without danger be ascribed to a *Creature*; the other necessarily implying such as are *peculiar* to *God* only. For to consider this *Pre-
tence* in a *Reflection* or two:

First, Does any Man that is *well* in his *Wits* discourse with his *Friend* at a *thousand Miles* distance from him, with that seriousness that those who worship the *Blessed VIRGIN* pray to Her? And yet why is the one esteemed a piece of *Piety*, while the other would be thought meer madness, but only that they suppose the *Blessed VIRGIN*, though absent from them, nevertheless to be capable of knowing what they do, while they think the other is not in a capacity of so doing? For as for *God's* communicating it to her, I presume he is as well able to do it in the *one instance* as in the *other*; and I think I may say, he has as much promised he will do the *first* as the *last*; that is indeed, there is no grounds that he will do it to either.

Or,

Or, *Secondly*, Were this a rational thing, would yet they themselves endure that a *Man* should, in the *House* of *God*, and in the midst of his solemn Devotions to him, not only *desire*, but in the same *breath* with which he *addresses* to *God*, invoke the Assistance of a pious Christian yet *living* upon *Earth*? Would they think this no more than an *act* of *Brotherly Charity*, and which one *Christian* might warrantably use towards another?

Much less, *Thirdly*, Would they permit the *Images* of a *living Christian* to be set up in their *Churches*; *Candles* to be *burnt* before them; and *Incense* offered to them; his Name to be put in the *Liturgies* of the *Church*, and all the Faithful upon *Earth* be directed and encouraged every where to *pray* to Him, as a most *useful* and *innocent* piece of *Piety*: And with the same opinion and confidence of his *hearing* their *Prayers*, and *answering* their *desires*, as they now call upon the *Blessed VIRGIN*? Would they say that this were no more than to ask a *private Friend*, as we have opportunity, to *pray* for us; or
to

to desire by Letter, the Supplications of our *absent Brethren* in our behalf?

And yet much less, *Fourthly*, Would they permit this *living Christian*, not only to be thus called upon to *pray* for his *Votaries*, but to *bless* them too, to keep them in their *Lives*, and to receive them at the *hour of Death*?

If indeed these are Instances of *Brotherly Charity*, I shall for my part be content to allow, that their Devotion to the *Holy MARY* is no more. But if the very *Supposition* of such a *Power* as this be something beyond the *natural Abilities* of any *Creature on Earth*, with what *Conscience* can it be said, that when they consecrate the *Images* of the *Blessed VIRGIN*, burn *Tapers* and *Incense* before them, list themselves under her *Protection*, commit all the care of their *Salvation* to her, call her the *Queen of Heaven*, and *Sovereign Lady of Angels and Men*; put her *Name* into their *Liturgies*, erect *Congregations* to her *Honour*, set apart *Festivals* and *Days* for her *particular Service*, and then call upon her at the *same time* in all *Parts* of the *World*, and this

this as expecting no small benefit from their *Prayers*; and therefore certainly in a confidence that she, though Ten thousand times farther off from us, than one *Christian* on Earth can be from another, does nevertheless know what they call upon her for, and can and will grant their desires; I say, with what *Conscience* can it be pretended, that in all this they do but entertain a *Brotherly Communion* with her; and in effect do no more than when a *Christian* here below desires a *Fellow-Christian* to pray for Him.

It remains therefore, that to ascribe to the *Holy MART* such a Power as is necessary to receive our *Prayers*, and to attend to our *Petitions*, and to search our *Hearts*, and know the motions of our *Souls* towards her, and answer us accordingly; is to raise her above the state of a *Creature*, and therefore unlawful for us so to do. And it is observable, that when the *Ancient Fathers* first began to make some kind of *Addresses* to the *Holy Martyrs*, not only the Subject of them was innocent, but the Supposition on which they went, as to this Point of the *Saints* or *Martyrs* hearing them,

them, however *faniſhful*, yet was ſuch as did not aſcribe any undue *Perfections* to them. They call'd upon them, not in *all places*, and at *all times* indifferently, but only at their *Monuments*, at the *places* of their *Suffering*, where their *Bodies* or *Reliques* were interr'd, and about which they had a conceit that their *Souls* hovered for ſome time; and therefore being preſent with them, were capable of *knowing* their *deſires*. In proceſs of time they began to *multiply* the *places* of *calling* upon them; and then there grew a *Queſtion* in the

Church, Whether the *Dead* know the things that are done in this *World* by the *Living*? And in particular, Whether the *Saints* do *hear* the *Prayers* of *Suppliants*, ſo as to underſtand the *Requeſts* that are made to them? This was at firſt reſolved in the *Negative*; but by degrees it grew to be more a

doubt: *Lombard* thought it was not *incredible*, but that they might *know* *our Affairs* as far as was requiſite *either for their Joy, or our Help*. But

Scotus went farther, and eſteemed it *probable*, that *God* does *ſpecially reveal* to them ſuch of our *Prayers* as are made unto them: And ſo it continued for

Gratian. c.
13. q. 2 de
Mortuis, c.
29. p. 1304,
1305. Par.
1585.

Sent. l. iv.
diſt. 45.

Scotus in
Sent. iv.
diſt. 45. q.
A. Rubio in
Sent. l. iv.
d. 25.

for some time, till at last it was found necessary to have the thing certainly believed, for the Reason I before gave :

And then Cardinal Bellarmin roundly concluded, That seeing otherwise

Bellarmin. li. cc. See above.

it would be in vain to pray ordinarily to those that we could not be sure were ordinarily able to receive our Prayers, and understand our Desires ; therefore it is certain the Saints above do know them. And another tells us, That it

Posant. in 1 Thom. qu. 12. ar. 10. disp. 7. Conclus. 6.

is a Matter of Faith, that the Blest above do know the Prayers that we pour out unto them, seeing otherwise they would be made in vain. And even our late Expositors are not only contented to allow all this to the Saints, by a Light communicated to them by God ; but give us some insinuation, as if they did not know why the Saints might not be allowed some knowledge even of themselves, of what is done here below, as also of our secret Thoughts.

Exposit. of Bishop Meaux, 9. iv.

And thus have we at last these Blessed SPIRITS invested with the Power and Attributes of the Divinity : And, as some have not doubted to call them, made Gods by Participation ; that is, Partakers of the Immensity, and other Privileges of God.

Bellarmin. de Cult. ff 1. 3. c. 9. p. 223.

But

But let those who presume to allow this to any *Saint* in *Heaven*, consider a little who it is that hath said, I am the *Lord*, that is my *Name*, and my *Glory* will I not give unto another: And certainly then they will see some *cause*, if not to correct their own ungrounded *Error* in this Matter, yet at least to think a little more favourably of us, that we dare not presume to joyn with them in it. But,

Secondly, The Second *Point* wherein we suppose them to have *erred* in their *Opinions* of the *Blessed Virgin*, is, That they ascribe to her the *Right* of a *Mediatrix* to *intercede* for us.

Now by a *Right* of *Interceding* for us, I do not mean such an *Intercession* as the Faithful here upon Earth many times make for one another; when they put up their *Prayers* to God to *forgive* their *Sins*, or to grant them any *Blessings* which they stand in need of. Whether the *Saints* above do in *general* pray for us or no, is a *Point* which none of us can certainly resolve, and therefore is not fit to be disputed by any.

any. That they have a great deal of *Love* and *Charity* for us, is not to be doubted; but how they express it, God has no where thought fit to declare to us, nor is it therefore either fit or needful for us to enquire into it. The *Intercession* which I here mean, is of another nature; and implies such a kind of *Prayer* as is founded on the *Merits* of the Person that *intercedes*; whereby he is able to plead a *Right* to *God's Mercy*: So that we may intreat *God* for his *Merits* to grant us his *Pardon* and *Forgiveness*.

Now, that this is the true Notion which those of the *Roman Church* have both in *general* of a *Mediator*, and in *particular* of the *Blessed VIRGIN*, when they address to her as their *Advocate*; is not only clear from the very *Addresses* themselves which they make to her, but is moreover acknowledged by themselves in the accounts they give us of this Power which they ascribe to her. I have before observed from one of their own *Authors*, Crafft, par. 1. p. 14. That to be a *Mediator*, and to discharge the *Office* of such a one, Three things are required: *viz.* *First*, That he who *intercedes* should have *Merited* that for which he *asks*: *Secondly*, That he should have
offered

offered his *Merits* to that End: And, Thirdly, That God should have accepted of them; And all this, they say, is true of the *Virgin MART*. She has merited all that she asks for us; She offered her *Merits* to be joyn'd with those of her Son for our *Salvation*, and God has accepted and ratified the Offering, in order to that End. Now that in this they attribute that to the *Virgin MART*, which the *Holy Scriptures* have every where reserved as the peculiar *Prerogative* of our *Saviour Christ*, not only *St. Paul* plainly declares, but the whole *Analogy* of the *Old* and *New Testament* assures us of it.

1. If first we consider the express Words of *Holy Scripture*, what can be more plain than that Declaration of *S. Paul* to *Timothy*, 1 Epist. ii. 5. That to us *Christians* there is as but one God, so but one Mediator between God and men, the man *Christ Jesus*, who gave himself a ransom for all. For if there be but one Mediator, and that the Man *Christ Jesus*, how then is the *Virgin Mary* too our Advocate in Heaven? If the Foundation of *Christ's Intercession* for us be built upon his Death, as this Text plainly declares,

declares; so that he is therefore our *Mediator* to intercede for us in *Heaven*, because he was our *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation*, i. e. our *Mediator* of *Redemption* on *Earth*: If the *Intercession* which he makes for us be this, That God having covenanted with him to forgive us, if he would lay down his *Life* for us, our *Saviour* *Christ* having done this, do's therefore now, in Right of this *Covenant*, represent his *Death* and *Passion* to his *Father* for our *Forgiveness*; then it must follow, That as the *Blessed VIRGIN* has neither any *Merits* of this kind to plead, nor did *God* ever enter into any *Covenant* with her to accept of any thing she did in order to our *Salvation*, so neither has she any *Right* to intercede for us in *Heaven*, nor ought we therefore to *pray* to her so to do.

It is I know a *Distinction* which some here make use of, when forced by the evidence of *Truth* to confess *Christ* to be our only *Mediator*, That there are two sorts of *Mediators*, one of *Redemption*, the other of *Intercession*: That *Christ* only is our *Mediator* of *Redemption*, and alone can plead a *Right* to our *Forgiveness*; but that others, and especially the *Virgin MARY* is a *Mediator* of *Inter-*
K k
cession,

cession, to implore *God's Favour* by humble *Prayer* and *Supplication* for us. But besides that it is evident from what I have before observed, That this is not indeed all the Opinion they have of the *Blessed Virgin* as our *Mediatrice*, whom they allow to have *Merits* to plead as well as her Son, and to intercede by a proper Right and Title for us; this Distinction is wholly frivolous: Since as I have now shewn the very Foundation of Christ's interceding for us in *Heaven*, is founded on his *Suffering* for us upon *Earth*; and no one can appear in the *Presence of God* to ask our Pardon there, but he only who died and gave himself a *Ransome* for us here.

2. But secondly, this will appear more clearly, if we consider the Analogy which the Author to the *Hebrews* makes between the two *Covenants*, and compare the *High-Priests* interceding for the People under the Law, with our Saviour Christ's interceding for us in *Heaven*.

It was the *Ordinance of God*, under the *Mosaical Dispensation*, that upon the great Day of *Expiation* the *High-Priest* should offer a *propitiatory Sacrifice* for

for the Sins of the whole People: And then carry the Blood of the *Sacrifice* into the most Holy Place, and present it before God, and so make an expiation for them. Now *the Law having a shadow of good things to come*, we are hereby taught to make this plain Application; That *Christ*, our *High-Priest*, having offered up himself as an *Expiatory Sacrifice* for the Sins of the whole World, is now *ascended into Heaven*, the most *Holy Place*, there to appear in the Presence of God for us; and by presenting his *Blood* before the *Throne* of Grace to make an *Attonement* for the Sins of all the true *Israelites*, who trust in it for their *Forgiveness*.

And as under the *Law*, no one was to appear in the Presence of God, but the *High-Priest* only, under Pain of Death, and he only once a Year, having first offered up the *Blood* of the *Sacrifice*; so now under the *Gospel*, *Christ* only appears in the Presence of God, with his own *Blood*, to intercede for us; and 'tis through his *Merits* and *Mediation* alone, not through that of any other whatsoever in *Heaven* or *Earth*, that we ought therefore to apply our selves to God for *Pardon* and *Salvation*.

K k 2

But

But still the Distinction before made will recur upon us: For be it that *Christ only* has a Power to plead the *Satisfaction* of his *Death* for our *Forgiveness*; yet may not the *Blessed Virgin* and the *Saints* too pray for the same thing, and in this Respect be called our *Advocates* and *Mediators*? To this I answer, first; That what the *Blessed VIRGIN* and the other *Saints* may do, as to this Matter, is unknown to us: In general they may possibly pray to God, to endue us with his *Grace*, whereby we may repent and be saved; But then neither have we any Assurance that they do this, much less that they do it in particular for every single Person that calls upon them; neither if they did, would this entitle them to the *Name* and *Dignity* of *Mediators*, properly so called, nor warrant us to pray to them as such. Secondly, much less would this be sufficient to engage us to put them in an *equal Rank* of *Mediation* with *Christ himself*: to joyn his *Merits* and theirs together; and pray to God, that for our *Saviour* and the *Virgin's* sake he would forgive us; which yet the *Church of Rome* most notoriously does. And besides, for what

what concerns our present purpose. Thirdly, This is not all they allow to the *Holy MART*, when they call upon her as their *Advocate*: No, they tell us plainly, as you have before seen, that she obtains nothing of God but what she has *merited* for us, she having joyned her *Actions* and *Sufferings* to those of *Christ* for the *Salvation* of *Mankind*, and God having *accepted* of them for that End. And this I suppose I have sufficiently shewn to be utterly repugnant to the whole tenor of the *New-Covenant*, and to the *Analogy* which the *Holy Scripture* it self has made between *that* and the *Old*.

Let us therefore go on, and enquire in the last place,

Thirdly, Whether there be any reason why we should give her those *Titles*, and ascribe to her such an *Authority* as in all their Solemn *Addresses* they allow to Her.

And, *First*, For what concerns those *Titles* which they give her, we shall need no long search after them: The

Litany of the Blessed *VIRGIN* alone contains above *forty* of them, and scarce one of which can without a very *favourable Construction* be allowed to her. But indeed having form'd all their *Devotion* upon this *Foundation*, of turning the *Kingdom* of *Heaven* into an *Earthly Court* ; having set up the *Saints* as *Masters of Requests*, to receive *Addresses*, and present them to *God* as *King* ; it was but fit afterwards to keep up the *Decorum*, by raising the *Blessed Virgin* to the *Dignity* of *QUEEN* there ; and then they ought not to address to her, without all the *Titles* and *Ceremonies* that became the *Quality* to which they had raised her.

Now 'tis to this *Vanity* we may ascribe the Eight last *Compellations* we meet with in her *Litany* ; and by which she is set forth to us as *Queen* of *Angels*, *Patriarchs*, *Prophets*, *Apostles*, *Martyrs*, *Confessors*, *Virgins*, and all *Saints* : And in all which, if there be not some *Excess*, yet doubtless there is a great deal of *Presumption*, and of the vain leaven of *Humane Folly* and *Ambition*. To call upon *God* Himself in a multiplicity of *Attributes*, which are neither pertinent to our purpose,

purpose, nor otherwise apt to raise those *Affections* in our *Souls* that are proper to the *Holy Exercise* we are about, is an argument of our Weakness and Vanity, rather than an instance of a *reasonable* and *religious* Respect. But to set up a *poor, humble Woman* in such a formal Pageantry of *Majesty* and *Glory* : To address to *Saints* in *Heaven*, as if they valued the little *Ceremonies* and *Titles* to which Men on Earth aspire, this is at best to shew a mind too much affected with the *Vanities* of this World ; but to do it without all warrant from *God*, or so much as the least signification of his Pleasure in it, is, I think, too near a presumptuous Impiety.

But these are not the *Titles* that the most offend us ; Others there are which we esteem by so much the more dangerous, by how much the more they encroach on the peculiar Attributes of *God* and our *Blessed Saviour*. For indeed, to whom else can it belong to be esteemed the *Help of Christians*, the *Comforter of the Afflicted*, the *Refuge of Sinners*, the *Gate of Heaven*, the

Ark of the Covenant, the Cause of our Joy, the Seat of Wisdom, and Mirrour of Justice ; but to Him alone who is the Author and Finisher of our Faith, from whom all Help, and Comfort, and Refuge to Sinners, does descend ; and who alone, by being the Gate of Heaven to us, is thereby the Cause of all our Joy.

I will not deny but that it may be possible for those who have found out a way to reduce all the *Prayers* that are made to the *Blessed VIRGIN* to that one sense, *Pray for us* ; to find out some convenient meaning for all these dangerous *Titles* too. But in the mean time, to what a desperate state, O God ! must that *Church* be arrived ; That those things should be a part of their Solemn Service, which cannot be uttered without Impiety, nor be excused but by this shameful Pretence ; that in their Publick Devotions, when one would think, if ever, they should take the Advice of Solomon, *not to be rash with their mouths, nor hasty to utter any thing before God*, even there they speak one thing and mean another ; they speak little less than *Blasphemy*, but still with

Ecclef. v. 2.

a very pious and innocent meaning, and such as no body would suspect to be intended by their words.

Secondly, As for the other thing here to be considered, the *Attributes* which they ascribe to the *Blessed Virgin*, these are yet more dangerous than the worst of all their Compellations of her. Such are,

1. Their ascribing to her a Power not only of *hearing* their *Prayers*, but of *dispensing* also *Blessings* unto them :
 " *Let MARY and her SON bless us :*
 " *Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,*
 " *our Life, our Sweetness, and our*
 " *Hope : To thee do we cry, poor ba-*
 " *nish'd Sons of Eve : To thee do we*
 " *send up our Sighs, mourning and weep-*
 " *ing in this Valley of Tears. Turn*
 " *then, most Gracious Advocate, thy*
 " *merciful Eyes towards us ; and after*
 " *this our Exile ended, shew us the*
 " *Blessed Fruit of thy Womb.*

2. Of *delivering* them from *danger*.
 So in her Office ; " *We fly to your*
 " *Protection, O Holy Mother of God ;*
 " *despise not our Prayers which we make*
 " 10

"to you in our Necessities, but deliver
 "us from all dangers, O ever Glorious
 "and Blessed VIRGIN!

3. Of enabling them to praise Her,
 and to overcome Her Enemies: "Vouch-
 "safe that we may be worthy to praise
 "thee, O Holy VIRGIN; and grant
 "us strength and power against thine
 "Enemies.

4. Of succouring them in their greatest
 Necessities: "MARY Mother of
 "Grace, Mother of Mercy, do thou pro-
 "tect us from our Enemy, and receive
 "us in the hour of Death.

5. And lastly, not to mention any
 more: A capacity to receive Praise and
 Glory together with God and our Bles-
 sed Saviour, in our most sacred returns
 of Thanksgiving to them: So a late
 Author in our own Language:

"Open my lips, O Mother of Jesus!

"And my Soul shall speak forth

"thy praise.

"Divine Lady be intent to my aid;

"Graciously make hast to help me.

"Glory be to JESUS and MARY,

"As it was, is, and ever shall be.

Now

Now in all these *Instances*, and many others that I might have mentioned, either they really intend what their words signify; and then what can all this be but a most desperate Superstition, to give all those *Attributes*, the *Power*, the *Glory*, to a *meer Creature*, that is due only to *God*: Or, if they do not, what is it then but to mock both *God* and the *Blessed VIRGIN*, to complement her with such *Titles*, and ask of her such *things*, and offer her such *Praises*, by which at the same time they neither seriously intend to signify any thing; but on the contrary, believe they should be guilty of a great Impiety, should they really mean what their words do certainly denote.

And if this be the case as to the *Foundation* of all that *Service* which these *Votaries* of the *Blessed VIRGIN* give her beyond us, it must then necessarily follow, that their *practice* built upon it, can have no very good Establishment. And I shall need say very little to *Apologize* for our *Church*, in that other *instance* wherein we are thought to be defective,

Secondly, In

Secondly, In our *Actions* built upon these *Opinions*.

Now these may be reduced to Three *general Points*, correspondent to the Three *Instances* I before laid down, and upon which these *Actions* are founded; *viz.*

- I. Of our not Praying to her.
- II. Our not flying to her *Merits* and *Intercession*.
- III. Our not paying her those other *Expressions of Worship*, which those of the *Church of Rome* allow so profusely to her.

For the first of these;

Our not *praying* to the *Blessed Virgin*.

I have already said, That we look upon this to be a *proper Act* of *Religious Worship*, and such as does necessarily imply a Supposition of such *Excellencies* in her, as cannot be supposed in any *Created Being*, how *great* and *glorious* soever it may otherwise be.
And

And therefore that it ought to be reserved as solely due to that God who alone is *infinite* in *Power* and *Knowledge*; and who alone, by being *present every where*, is every where fit to be called upon.

And this I say, with reference to the very thing it self, without considering what kind of *Prayers* they are that are made to her. But now, *Secondly*, Not only to call upon the *Blessed VIRGIN* to pray for us, but that she would *her self* aid and assist us; and which 'tis evident, that in many, if not all the *Prayers* of her Office they do; this does yet more encrease the danger of such a *Service*, and yet more justify our *refusal* of it.

When therefore it shall be proved to us, either that we can with *Faith* call upon the *Blessed VIRGIN*, and yet not suppose that she is able either to hear our *Prayers*, or to answer our *Desires*; or that we can without *Impiety* suppose that she can do either: When it can be shewed, that there is any manner of *warrant* in *Holy Scripture*, or so much as *Encouragement* to pray to Her; or that 'tis possible for any *Benefit* to accrue to us by so doing,

ing, which we might not as certainly and readily *obtain* by going immediately to the *Throne of Grace*, through our *Lord Jesus Christ*. In a word, when it can be made appear to us, either that *Prayer* is not a *proper Act of Religious Worship*, or that all such *Acts* are not reserved by our *Holy Religion*, as due to *God only*: Then will we be content that our *Adversaries* should accuse us as *Enemies* to the *Holy MART*, for not joining with them in this *Service*. But till then this one Consideration shall be of more moment with us, than *Ten thousand* of their *Anathema's*, That seeing to *pray* to any one, does imply the *Person* so called upon, to have such a *Knowledge and Power, and Presence*, as no *finite, created Being*, is, or can be capable of, we ought to give this *Service* to that *God only* who *alone* is *infinite* in all these *Perfections*: Whom *alone* the *Scripture* sets forth to us as a *God hearing Prayers*, and *searching the Heart*; and therefore to whom *alone*, in all such *Addresses*, all *Flesh* must come.

For

For the next thing proposed,

Secondly, Our not flying to the Blessed VIRGIN's Merits and Intercession.

What I have before offered, may suffice for our *Excuse*: *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ* ^{1 Joh. ii. 1, 2.} *the Righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* This is our Mediator, who has promised us, *That whatsoever* ^{Joh. xv. 16.} *we ask the Father in his Name, he will give it us.* Who has invited us to come to him in all our needs; who ^{Heb. iv. 13. & v. 2.} *was in all things tempted as we are, that he might know how to have Compassion on us in our Temptations; and to whom therefore the Apostle exhorts us to address on these Occasions, Let us therefore* (says he) *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need.* And whilst this Saviour liveth continually to make *Intercession* for us, we cannot imagine either what *Reason* or *Piety* there can be in seeking to any other. ^{Heb. iv. 16.}

IF

If indeed these *Votaries* of the Blessed *VIRGIN* can prove to us, either that the *Holy Scripture* has commanded us to joyn the *Merits* and *Intercession* of the *Mother*, with those of the Son for our *Salvation*; nay, or but produce the least *Example* or *Encouragement* to warrant our doing of it: If they can give us but any *shadow* of *Reason*, why the *Merits* and *Intercession* of *Christ* should not be alone *sufficient* to obtain whatever we stand in need of, without the help of any others *Merits* to make them the more effectual; or being so, why we should seek to any others *Intercession*: If they can shew, that notwithstanding all the *Promises* before made to us, yet really our *Saviour Christ* does not love us so well as the *Virgin MART*; nor is so ready to hear us, and pity us; to accept our *Prayers*, and present them to *God*, as he hath declared himself to be; and that the Blessed *VIRGIN* is more willing, and kind, and ready to do it for us: Then indeed it may be worth our considering how to provide another and better *Advocate* for our assistance; but till then, we shall think it enough for us that we

See *Crafft*,
par. 1. p. 14.

we have an *Advocate* whom we *know*, who we are sure does *hear* us; and who has *promised* to *assist* and *succour* us; and that therefore we need not seek to any other, of whom we can never be sure; nay, have all the reason in the World to believe that She can neither *hear*, nor *help*; nor will take any notice either of our *Prayers*, or of our *Wants*.

For the last thing to be considered;

Thirdly, Those other Expressions of *Worship* which they allow to the *Blessed VIRGIN*.

They are both too *many* in *number*, and too *considerable* in their *weight*, to be particularly examined in this Discourse; and the same *Answer* will serve for them all, That they are *Instances* of *Worship* either in *themselves* *unlawful*, or not fit to be paid to any but to God only. I shall give an *Example* or two in either kind, and so conclude.

And, *First*, It is no small part of their respect to the *Blessed VIRGIN*,

L 1

*Crassus De.
rot. varit.
par. 2. trait.
6. p. 341,
&c.*

TO

to consecrate her Images, and set them up in their publick Places of Worship; to light up Candles, and burn Incense before them; to carry them forth in Procession, and go on Pilgrimages to them; and report strange Miracles that have been wrought by them. Now all these are Acts of Worship which the Word of God has expressly and utterly forbid, and which therefore we think it to be absolutely unlawful for any Christian to joyn in. God having plainly declared, that he will not suffer any Image to be set up and honoured by us; nor hold them by any means innocent, that shall upon any account whatsoever presume so to do.

Secondly, They burn Incense to her; They build Chappels, and Altars, and Oratories to her Service; they offer up the Mass, i. e. if they are in the right, the Body, Soul and Divinity of the Son of God to her Veneration; They put themselves under her Protection; Enter into Orders and Congregations for her more particular Worship; They Vow themselves, and all they have, or hope to have, to her; They Swear by her Name;

Name ; They *Pray, Confess, Absolve*, in short, apply all the most solemn parts of their *Devotion* to her : And by all these, and many other Instances too long to be here particularly enumerated, they give that *Worship*, and *Honour* and *Glory* to the *Holy VIRGIN*, which the *Christian Religion* teaches us, and the *Practice* of the best and purest *Ages* of the *Church* directs us to give to *God only*.

Now if these things be indeed so as we suppose, and as I think I may presume to say I have in some measure proved them to be ; then certainly it cannot be wondered, if we refuse to give that *Service* to the *Virgin MART*, which we are persuaded belongs to *God alone*. But if we are mistaken in our *Opinions*, and that all this which I have here mentioned, these *Doctrines* and these *Practices*, be no more than what may be ascribed to a *meer Creature* ; let this be once evidently made out to us, and then they may with some colour of *Justice* pass that *Censure* upon us, which till then will be nothing but

an ungrounded Calumny ; that for not doing such things as these, we are none of these of whom that *Blessed VIRGIN* prophesied in the *Text*,

That behold from thenceforth all Generations should call her Blessed.

I have now done with the several *Points* I propos'd to speak to ; and shall perhaps be thought by some to have insisted more than was necessary upon the discovery of these kind of *Superstitions*. But from this Suspicion I doubt not but you will soon clear me, if you will please only to go along with me in a few *Reflections* arising from what has been offer'd, and with which I shall close up this Discourse.

And the *First* is, of the great *Importance* of this Subject, upon many accounts to us. The *Errors* I have now been encountering, are not of any ordinary kind : They represent to you one of the greatest of *Sins*, the *Worshipping* of the *Creature* with the *Service* due to the *Creator* ; and which I
had

The Twelfth Sermon.

had rather thus describe, than by its *proper Name* to you. And what the sad Consequence of it has been, appears in this; That while they have thus laboured to set up the *Veneration* of the *Blessed VIRGIN*, they have but too much debased the *Honour* of our *L O R D*; and lessened His *Glory*, to raise Hers.

I need not say how much more *Piety* is shewn by many of that *Communion*, especially among the *vulgar sort*, to *M A R T*, than to *C H R I S T* himself. How many more particular *Votaries* she has, and how much more *trust* and *confidence* is put in her *Intercession*, than in that of the *Blessed J E S U S*. I do not charge the whole *Church of Rome* as guilty of all this; but I must needs say I could heartily wish they were not all too much accessory to it. Whilst by such *Principles* and such *Practices* as these, they not only give occasion to the *common sort* to run into undue *Excesses*; but permit their more learned *Guides* even to encourage them in it.

Widenfelt's
Advices of
the Bl. Vir-
gin.

It is well known, how far Father *Crasset* abroad, and one of our own *Countrymen* nearer home, has but very lately revived the almost forgotten Excesses of former Ages. And when one of their own *Communion*, afraid, and indeed ashamed of these Abuses, put forth some *Advices* for the *Cor-rection* of them, instead of encouraging the Admonition, all the Powers of the *Church* were thought too little to overwhelm him, as if he had *preach'd* some *new Gospel*, or denied the *Son* of *God* to be come in the *Flesh*.

And now when this is the Case, I do not well see how they will be able to clear themselves altogether of those *Follies*, which they so readily encourage; and not only neglect to correct themselves, but will not suffer those who would, to do it.

Nay, but we must not stop here: They have given a yet greater encouragement to the dishonour of our *Saviour* than this. If we look into their *Churches*, and there view their *Pictures*, and their *Images*, those
Books

Books of the Ignorant, as they are pleased to call them ; what can be either more wretched in it self, or more apt to seduce unthinking *Voluntaries*, than every where to see *Holy MART* with our *Saviour* still an *Infant* in her *Arms* ; as if he were never to get out of the state of his *Pupillage*.

And this were yet tolerable, if they thereby took care to call back their *Minds* to the condition of his *Infancy* once when on *Earth*. But alas ! I must add, what exceeds all *Extravagances* besides, that they set him out still as a *Child* in *Heaven*. Nor is there any thing more common in the *Lives* of their *Saints*, in the *Records* of the *Miracles* of the *VIRGIN*, and even in their *Offices* and *Books* of *Devotion*, than to hear of the *Son* of *God* brought down in the *Arms* of his *Mother*, and still behaving himself as a little *Child* towards her *Voluntaries*. And what mean and low *Opinions* such things as these must needs create in *Superstitious* and *Ignorant* *Minds* of the *Saviour* of the

Ll 4 *World,*

World, is very natural to conceive ; and the Devotion of the *People* towards the *Blessed VIRGIN*, compared with their *Notions* and *Zeal* towards the *Holy JESUS*, does but too *fatally demonstrate*.

But, *Secondly*, This Consideration is not only thus *important* in it self, but of a more *especial concern* with regard to us.

Were the *Votaries* of the *Blessed VIRGIN* content with a *Speculative Opinion* of her *Excellencies* ; or would they be satisfied to pay her what *Homage* they thought fit themselves, without forcing others to joyn in it ; this Matter, though very *Scandalous* to our *Religion*, yet would not so much concern our *Practice*. But now that the very *Publick Devotion* of the *Church* is wholly over-run with this Abuse ; so that 'tis impossible to *pray* to *God* with them, unless you will be content to *pray* to *Holy MARY* too : it was certainly very necessary for us to understand the danger of such an *Error*, which is thus

thus combined with the most *publick* and *solemn Piety* of a whole Body of *Christians*.

And then, *Thirdly*, This is a *Point* not only of very great moment in it self, and of a particular concern to us; but very plain too, and easie to be understood.

In other things, though our Arguments are strong to those that comprehend the force of them; yet many times the Subject is obscure, and the *Disputation* past the Capacity of the *ordinary Christian*. Thus in their *Doctrines* about the *Church*; the *Authority*, *Unity*, *Infallibility*, and other either real or pretended Privileges of it: The *Argument* is *nice*, and easily perplexes an uninstructed Capacity. But here the Advice is evident, and the whole Subject easie: The only hardship is to bring them to own their *Doctrine*, but afterwards the most *Vulgar Christian* is able to discern the falseness of it. Those first *Rudiments* of *Christianity*, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy*

The Twelfth Sermon.

thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve: How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? There is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, and the like, being abundantly sufficient to shew how *impossible* it is that those should not have departed from their first Faith, who give Religious Honour to the Virgin M A R Y, and set her up as a *Mediatrice* in Heaven.

Now this being once proved, it will from hence presently follow,

Fourthly, That all the Pretences of the Church of Rome against us, are vain; and that we not only had sufficient Reason, but that it was our Duty to reform, as we did from them.

For to consider this Argument in one word. If the Church of Rome be *actually* and undoubtedly Erroneous in this Point, then let her fancy what she please, 'tis plain she can Err, and is not what she says, *Infallible*.

If she be not *Infallible*, then there
can

can be no Obligation to believe and follow her at all Adventures; without examining what she teaches, whether it be *true* or *false*.

If we may examine her *Doctrine*, then the End of all *Examination* being to find out the *Truth*, and to cleave unto it; it must follow, that when upon the Enquiry, we had discovered her to be involved in grievous *Errors*, it was our Duty to *abandon* her *Corruptions*, and to *declare* against them.

And thus this one *Point* alone being well cleared, does in the *Consequence* of it, plainly prove a *Vindication* of the whole Work of the *Reformation*; and is alone sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced Mind, what just Cause we had for it.

And let us then *Bless* God, who has opened our Eyes to discover such *Abuses* as these, and which had almost subverted the very chief *Principles* of *Christianity*. And let us as we ought, value nothing so much as that *Purity* of *Religion* in which we have the happiness to exceed most *Christians* in the World.

Let

Let our *Adversaries*, if they please, revile us ; let them call us *Hereticks* and *Schismatics*, *Despisers* of the *Church*, and *Haters* of the *Blessed Virgin* ; let them fill *Heaven* and *Earth* with their *Anathema's* against us, because we will not joyn with them in these and the like Abominations. But let us stand fast in the *Lord*, and in the *Religion* which we have received, knowing from whom we have received it, and what is the rule and measure of it : And that though, I do not say They or We, or any other *Church* or *Society* of Men whatsoever ; but though an *Angel from Heaven*, though *St. Peter himself* should
Galat. i. 9. come to us and *preach* any other *Gospel*, he is to be *accursed*.

I shall conclude all with those excellent words of an *Ancient Father* of the *Church*, against some who began in his time to *Honour* the *Blessed VIRGIN*, though not with any part of that excess that these Men now do ; yet more than he supposed was fitting for them : “ ’Tis true “ (says he) *MARY* was *Holy*, but
 “ she

“She was not therefore *God*: She
“was a *Virgin*, and *highly honoured*,
“but she was not set forth to us
“to be *worshipp’d*: And therefore
“the *Holy Gospel* has herein arm’d us
“before hand; our *Lord* himself say-
“ing, *Woman, what have I to do with*
“*thee*? Wherefore does he say this?
“But only lest some should think of
“the *Blessed VIRGIN* more highly
“than they ought. He called her
“*Woman*, as it were foretelling those
“*Schisms* and *Heresies* that should
“arise upon *her account*. But God
“permits us not to *worship Angels*;
“how much less the Daughter of
“*Anna*?

“Let *MART* be held in *Honour*,
“but let the *Father, Son, and Holy*
“*Ghost* be *Worshipped*. Let no one
“*Worship MART*; for though she
“were most *fair*, and *holy*, and
“*honourable*, yet she is not therefore
“to be *adored*. To conclude; Let
“*MART* be held in *Honour*, but
“let *God* be *Adored*.

Now

Now to this God who alone has
infinite Perfections, and is a God
hearing Prayer; let us ascribe,
as is most due, *Salvation*, and
Glory, and *Power*, and *Praise*,
and *Thanksgiving*, for ever and
ever, Amen.

F I N I S.

ADVERTISEMENT

Of Books published by the Reverend
Dr. W A K E.

There having been lately a little, trifling *Discourse*, concerning the *Blessed Sacrament*, published and spread abroad in the Name of Dr. Wake, dedicated to the Princess of Denmark; it is thought convenient here to let the World know, how great an injury has been done to him in it.

To prevent such Practices for the time to come, the Reader is desired to take notice, that the Doctor has yet published no other Books than what are here subjoined; nor will ever hereafter set his Mark, where he is not willing to write his Name.

Printed for Richard Chiswell.

AN Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England, in the several Articles proposed by the late BISHOP of CONDOM, [in his Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholick Church.] 4^{to}.

A Defence of the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England, against the Exceptions of Monsieur de Meaux, late Bishop of Condom, and his Vindicator.

A Second Defence of the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England, against the new Exceptions of Monsieur de Meaux, late Bishop of Condom, and his Vindicator. The FIRST PART.

Second Defence of the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England, against Monsieur de Meaux and his Vindicator. The SECOND PART.

A Discourse of the Holy Eucharist, in the two great Points of the Real Presence, and the Adoration of the Host: in Answer to the Two Discourses lately Printed at Oxford, on this Subject. To which is prefixed a Large Historical Preface, relating to the same Argument.

Two Discourses of Purgatory and Prayers for the Dead.

A

A Continuation of the Controversie between the Church of England and the Church of Rome, being a full Account of the Books that have been of late written on Both sides.

Preparation for Death; being a Letter sent to a Young Gentlewoman in France, in a Distemper of which she died.

Printed for William Rogers.

A Discourse concerning the Nature of Idolatry; in which a late Author, viz. the Bishop of Oxford's true and only Notion of Idolatry, is considered and confuted. 4^{to}.

The Sum of a Conference between Dr. Cragut and F. P. Gooden, about Transubstantiation. Published by this Author with a Preface.

Printed for Richard Chiswell, and William Rogers.

TWO Sermons; One before the King and Queen; the other before the House of Commons; Both Reprinted in this present Collection.

Other Tracts by the same Author.

A Sermon Preached at Paris, on the 30th of January, S. V. 1683.

The Present State of the Controversie.

Sure and Honest Means for Conversion of all Hereticks; and wholsom Advice and Expedients for the Reformation of the Church. The Preface by this Author.

A Letter from several French Ministers fled into Germany, upon the account of the Persecution in France, to such of their Brethren in England as approved the King's Declaration touching Liberty of Conscience. Translated from the Original French.

